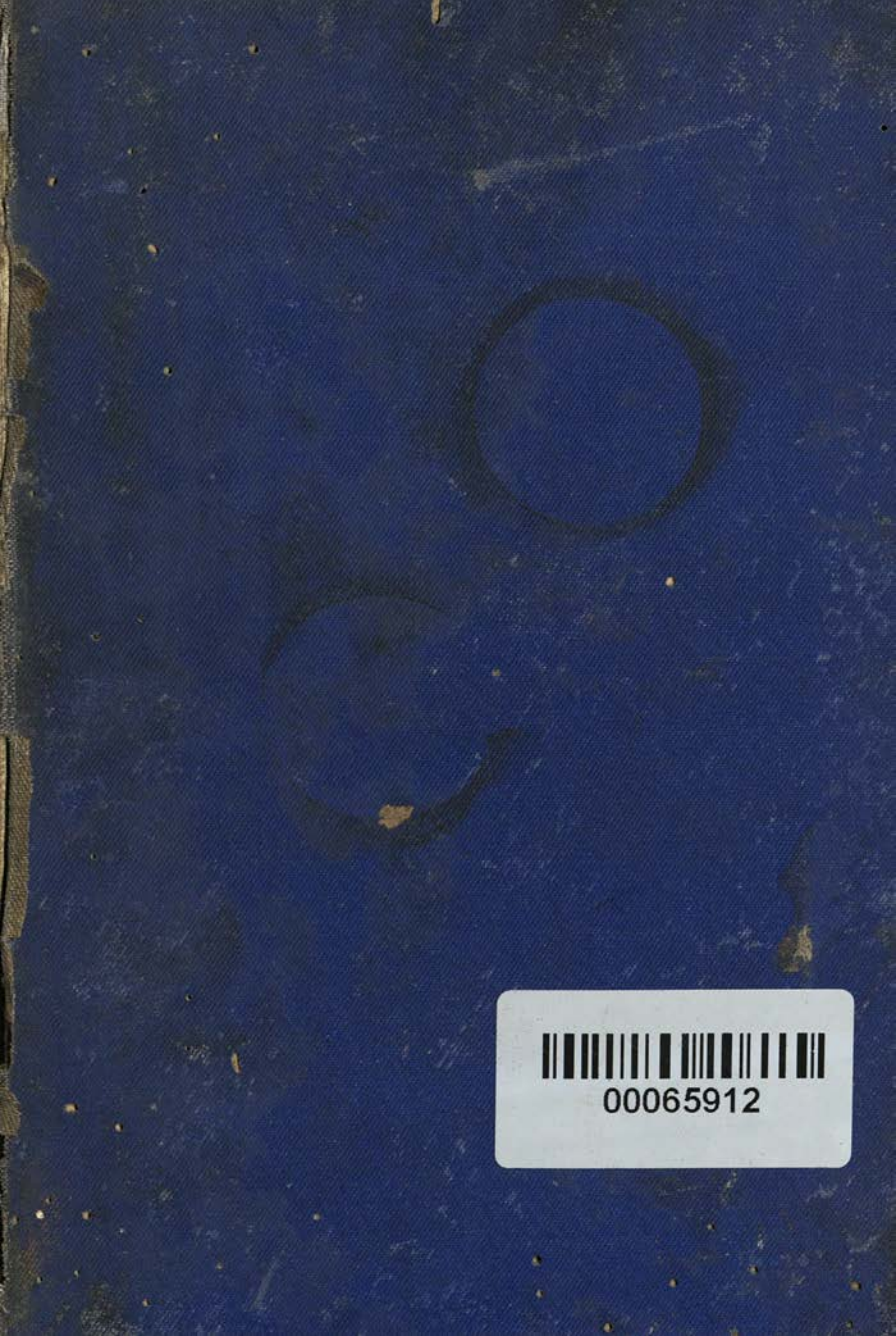
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HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

IN

EAST ANGLIA

Caister Church.

Highways and Byways in East Anglia

65912

BY WILLIAM A. DUTT
WITH · ILLUSTRATIONS · BY
JOSEPH PENNELL

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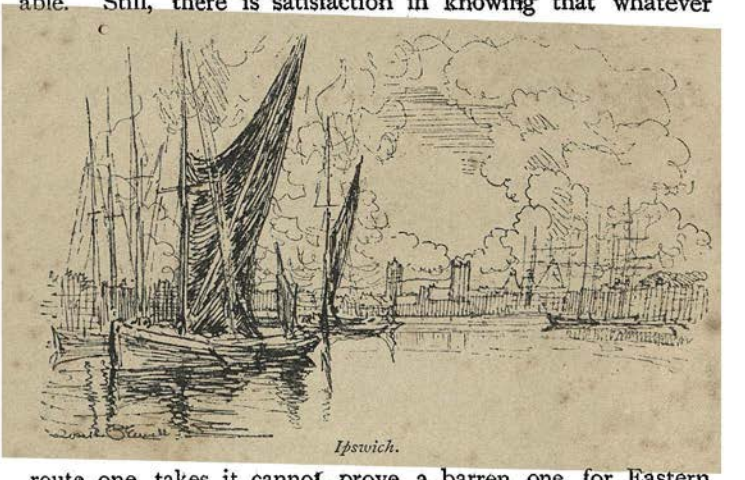
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS
IN
EAST ANGLIA

CHAPTER I

IPSWICH, WOODBRIDGE, PARHAM, AND FRAMLINGHAM

To set out on a tour through East Anglia without first ascertaining East Anglia's extent and precise bounds, is to enter upon a somewhat vague and venturesome enterprise; yet that is what I am about to do, and with little care as to where my wanderings may take me. As a matter of fact, the limits of East Anglia have never, since the days of the East Anglian kings, been clearly defined, and I doubt whether even in their time it was known with absolute certainty where Northumbria and Mercia ended and East Anglia began. Norfolk and Suffolk are certainly in East Anglia, and so, too, are portions of Essex, Cambridgeshire, and Lincolnshire; but I question whether even the London Society of East Anglians, widely as it defines the term "East Anglian," would consider as such a man born in, say, Grimsby or Leytonstone. So it is left for every one to decide for himself how much of Eastern England is East Anglia; and as this gives me a fairly wide field for travel I may well set out with a light heart, little

heeding how often I stray from the great high roads or cross from one county into another. Yet at the outset I realise that I must be content with journeying through some parts of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire, and leave Lincolnshire to some other highway and byway peregrinator. Even so curtailed, my itinerary will be as remarkable for what it misses as what it brings me in touch with; but the square acreage of the Eastern counties is so considerable that this is unavoidable. Still, there is satisfaction in knowing that whatever



Ipswich.

route one takes it cannot prove a barren one, for Eastern England is so rich in romantic, historical, and legendary interest, and so full of relics of the days when that interest was created, that go where you will between Ipswich and Ely, and Thetford and the shores of the North Sea, you will always find your eyes and mind pleasantly occupied. This wealth of diverse interest goes far towards atoning for the monotony of much of the scenery, which is generally of a pastoral kind. Although the lowland districts afford wide and inspiring vistas, East Anglian scenery can nowhere be described as grand or sublime, and it only attains to perfect charm and

loveliness where winding rivers and placid lagoons are its most conspicuous and pervading features.

I could never find it in me, however, to decry East Anglian scenery because of its tameness; rather, I could pity the man who is unable to discover in its quaint old-world hamlets, leafy lanes and byways, breezy heaths, flower-spangled meads, thatched farmsteads, and ancient shrines many elements of the picturesque. As for the historical interest of the district, it both gains and loses something in that many of the events in which it originated occurred so long ago that they have become inseparably associated with romantic legends and untrustworthy traditions. For instance, no battles of any importance have been fought in East Anglia since the days of the Norman kings; but long before those days the district was the scene of strenuously contested encounters between the Danes and Angles, the grave-heaps of whose slain may still be seen on the Thetford warrens; while centuries before Edmund the Martyr met his death at the hands of Inguar and Ubba, the brave queen of the Iceni led her half-savage warriors against the trained legions of Rome. Of the details of these grim fights, which were fought before the days of those monkish chroniclers who were always ready to record any unusual fact or wonderful myth, we know little or nothing; we can only point to the grass-grown barrows and let them speak for themselves. And if we are at a loss when asked to tell of these encounters, what can we say about the prehistoric strife which brought the swarthy, skin-cloaked Eskurians to the Brandon flint pits, those primitive arsenals where they fashioned their axes and arrows of stone? "Grimes Graves," as these pits are called, remain to us to-day, and near them dwell "knappers" who even now work flints in much the same manner as did the men of the Stone Age; but how little do they tell us of the vanished race who dug them! Even if we remove the wind-heaped warren sand, and grope with spade and pickaxe, we unearth only a few flint flakes and primitive

weapons, and the conclusions we draw from these relics are more remarkable for vagueness than value. And as it is with the early battles, so it is with the early warriors of East Anglia, such as Redwald, Edmund, and, later, Hereward. We know they existed and believe they did wonderful deeds; but we are told that we must read of those deeds, as they are handed down to us by the old chroniclers, in much the same spirit as we read of the fabulous exploits of the ancient gods.

So I do not ask any one to believe all I shall tell of the castles and abbeys, towns and hamlets of East Anglia. If I have any aim or method in my narrations, it is to follow the lead of the monkish chroniclers and relate both fact and myth, generally leaving it to others to judge where the line should be drawn between them. Wherever I go I am an incurably sentimental traveller; I love to muse over a grey old priory as much on account of its incredible legends as for its actual and credible history. Walsingham Abbey loses nothing of its charm for me because Erasmus made caustic comment on the silly stories he heard from the monks there; the assurance of a learned bookworm that Dunwich in the height of its prosperity did not rival the London of its day, does not rob me of a moment's pleasure while I stand on the cliffs from which the old city sank into the sea. As I am a seeker of the picturesque in scenery, so am I a searcher for the romantic in story; and while I have eyes for the one and instinct for finding the other, no isolated hamlet can be utterly dull to me, or legend and ballad without its interest or charm.

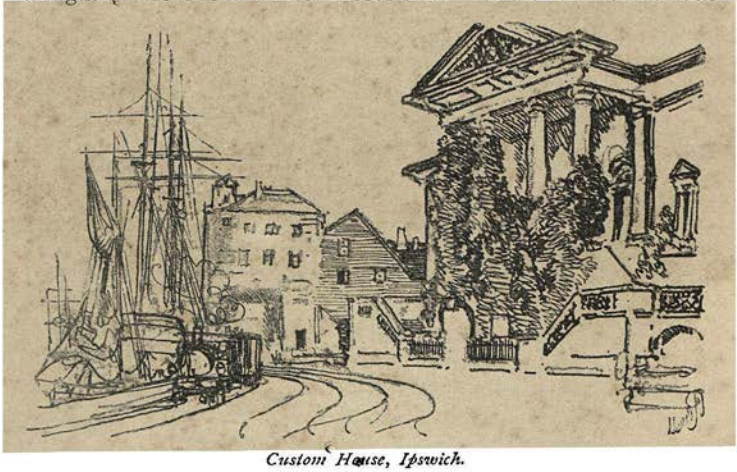
Just one hundred and seventy-eight years ago, in the month of April, and almost on the same day of that month as this on which I am setting out on a tour through East Anglia, the author of *Robinson Crusoe* started on a journey through the Eastern counties, with a view to writing a "particular and diverting account of whatever is curious and worth observ-

ation" in those counties. After loitering among the Essex marshes, where he was much impressed by meeting with men who had had from five or six to fourteen or fifteen wives, and describing at length the siege of Colchester during the Civil War of 1648, Defoe came to Ipswich, where he found much that was curious and diverting. The town especially commended itself to him on account of its "very agreeable and improving company almost of every kind"; but with the ardour of an enthusiastic pamphleteer he promptly set about

Ipswich Harbour.

confuting the "wild observations" of certain earlier writers, whose aims, in all probability, had been not unlike his own. These "wild observations" do not now move us to either amazement or indignation: they apply to such subjects as the building of two-hundred-tons ships (Defoe maintained that the Ipswich shipwrights were capable of building ships of upwards of four-hundred tons), and their launching at John's Ness. Nor, for my own part, am I tempted, even by the prospect of enjoying agreeable and improving company, to linger in the town; for this is one of the first warm mornings of spring, and I

am longing to get away from the busy streets and into the midst of Rushmere Heath, where I know the larks are soaring and singing, and the gorse is bursting into a blaze of bloom. Ipswich, I am quite ready to admit, is a charming town; its Ancient House is worth a long journey to see; but unlike a very distinguished traveller, who, according to his biographer, started from the Bull Inn, Whitechapel, in the morning and arrived at Ipswich at nightfall, I have no intention of spending a night at the Great White Horse Inn. The character of that

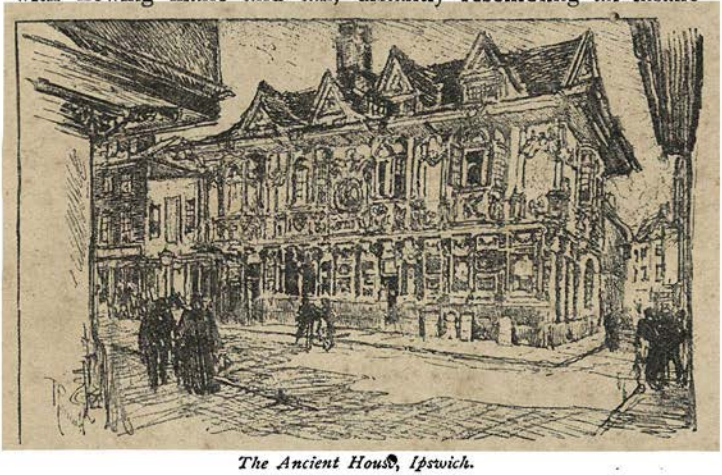


Custom House, Ipswich.

famous hostelry is, no doubt, unimpeachable; but I cannot forget Mr. Pickwick's experiences there when, after receiving the confidences of Mr. Peter Magnus, he retired to the wrong bedroom and had such a disconcerting encounter with the middle-aged lady in yellow curl papers. So I take to the Woodbridge Road—the old London to Yarmouth coach road—telling myself that if nothing unforeseen befall me I will stand under the walls of Framlingham Castle before their outlines are indefinable in the dusk.

If it were necessary, I might well rely on Dickens to guide

me over many miles of my journey through south-eastern East Anglia. *Pickwick* is quite as definite as *Murray* when it comes to dealing with the Great White Horse. "In the main street of Ipswich, on the left-hand side of the way, a short distance after you have passed through the open space fronting the Town Hall, stands an inn known far and wide by the appellation of the Great White Horse, rendered the more conspicuous by a stone statue of some rampacious animal with flowing mane and tail, distantly resembling an insane



The Ancient House, Ipswich.

cart-horse, which is elevated above the principal door. The Great White Horse is famous in the neighbourhood, in the same degree as a prize ox, or county paper-chronicled turnip, or unwieldy pig—for its enormous size." And when *Pickwick* failed me, *David Copperfield* would come to my aid, and I must be without the slightest development of the bump of locality if, with the assistance of that delightful autobiography, I could not find my way to Lowestoft, where David stayed on his way to London; Blundeston, where he spent his boyhood; and Yarmouth, where he explored with Peggotty the

beachmen's colony and rambled through the quaint old "rows." But David would desert me when we reached Wickham Market, and I should have to find my own way to Framlingham; so I will leave him and Mr. Pickwick gazing together out of the stationer's window at the Ancient House, and venture out alone on to Rushmere Heath, finding consolation in the fact that no gibbet now swings its ghastly burden on that desolate waste land, and that I live in an age when I can approach the Kesgrave barrows without hearing the wailings of the spirits of the dead in the voice of the wind among the trees. Indeed, on such a morning as this, and on such a sunny, breezy plain, one can well do without human or fictive society. The warm breath of spring, fragrant with the fresh odour of the young seed leaves; the lengthening hazel and alder catkins, the purple dead nettles, the singing thrushes, blackbirds, wrens, and robins, all go far towards making up for the absence of human life from the long, white, turf-bordered road.

So I am content to travel slowly along the border of Rushmere Heath, not only on account of the singing birds and the spring wild flowers, but because I remember that it was along this same Woodbridge road that the heroine of that "romantic but perfectly true narrative," the *History of Margaret Catchpole*, hastened, with her lover Will Laud, the daring smuggler, on the night of her escape from Ipswich Gaol. Will Laud was often afloat on the Orwell, or concealed in the river's quiet creeks, and it was from its bank that Margaret, beguiled, by the sham Dutchman's story, from the Priory Farm at Downham Reach on a harvest home night, anxiously scanned the dimming reaches for a glimpse of the smuggler's sail. There, too, she may have seen—and the Rev. R. Cobbold, in his "perfectly true narrative," says she *did* see—old Tom Colson, better known as Robinson Crusoe, the Orwell fisherman who had a horseshoe nailed to his crazy boat, and his body adorned with mystic signs and amulets. He it was, we are

told, who on that fateful autumn night, when Laud and Luff had planned to carry off the faithful Margaret in their lugger, came down upon them on the shores of Downham Reach, and, laying about him with his long-handled cod-hook, beat them off and set the maiden free. But Margaret, although she escaped then, was fated to again become the victim of nefarious schemes, and in the end her enemies and unworthy friends succeeded in ruining her reputation and getting her transported to Botany Bay. Her story is well known in Suffolk, where the scenes of her escapades and those of her persecutors are still pointed out to the curious; but outside the county it arouses little interest. Yet her life, in its early stages, was a singularly eventful one, and her ride to London is as notable in its way as Turpin's legendary ride to York.

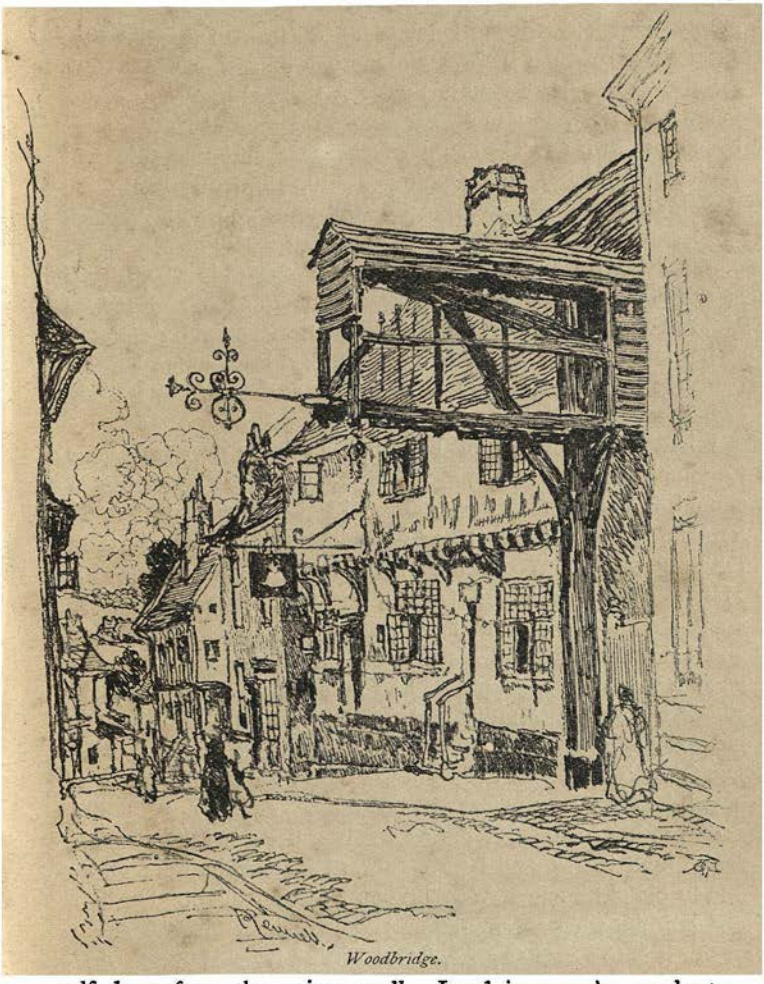
Ever since she was a child living under her father's roof on the border of the Nacton heathland, Margaret had been renowned for her skill at riding; and it was a knowledge of this that led her enemies to concoct the scheme which brought her into trouble. Telling her that her lover despaired of ever seeing her again, fear of the excisemen preventing him from venturing into Suffolk, they persuaded her to take from her master's stables one of the best horses and ride to Laud's place of concealment. Not until she had donned a stableman's clothes and mounted the horse was she informed of her lover's whereabouts, and then she learned that he was hiding in London. Feeling that it was then too late to abandon her daring enterprise, she refused to think what might be its consequences, so at one o'clock on a May morning in the year 1797 she set out on her long ride. With only the ever-watchful stars to see her, she rode quietly out of Ipswich and on to the main road to London. Instead of troubling about the fearful penalty of horse-stealing in those days, all her thoughts were of the lover she was to meet and the happiness which, after a long period of heart-ache and unrest, they were to share. I fancy I can hear her draw a long breath of relief as she leaves

the last town house behind her and sees before her, stretching like a white ribband between the shadowy fields, the silent deserted country road. The new foliage of the roadside trees, as yet untarnished by the dust the mails will set flying ere many weeks are gone, makes the night air fragrant; and the white blossoms of the blackthorn, just vanishing before the blooming of the may, are like a rime-frost on the hedgerows. Nightingales are singing in the copses; now and again an owl hoots in a dusky wood or flies heavily over the fields; but Margaret is heedless of all the sights and sounds of the fine May night; scarcely conscious even of the movements of the horse beneath her. She is thinking of the days when as a child she rode her father's plough horses home from the fields; of her first meeting with Laud in the little cottage in Nacton village street; of her night's experience on the shores of Downham Reach; and thinking of these things, and of the strange treatment she has received at her lover's hands, some doubt may have arisen in her mind as to how he would receive her, and the wisdom of again putting faith in his promises. But she has no thought of turning back; and when, within two miles of Colchester, the Ipswich mail dashes past her, she turns her head aside so that the driver may not see her face. The guard, however, recognises the horse, and calls to the driver that there must be "something wrong" for a groom to be riding at such a pace, and when he reaches Ipswich, and recounts what he has seen, the news soon spreads and the strawberry roan is missed from the stables. Of all this Margaret knows nothing, so cannot be aware that even while she is only a little more than halfway on her journey an Ipswich printer is striking off copies of a handbill about a stolen gelding, to be sent to London by the morning mail. At Marks Tey she makes the only pause in her long ride, and then only stops long enough to give her noble horse a feed of corn. This is at five o'clock in the morning, and she has already been five hours in the saddle. At Chelmsford she

The Red Lion, Martlesham.

dares not stop for fear her appearance there at such an early hour should excite suspicion. So she rides out of the dark into the dawn, her face white with weariness, but freshened by the cool breezes of the spring morning; she sees the owls fly home to the woods and the larks rise to welcome the new day; and the gallant roan, responsive to the longing of his rider's heart that she may soon rest in her lover's arms, thuds onward at the same fast even pace he has kept up all through the night. She passes through Stratford just at the time when people are at their breakfasts, and at half-past nine trots into the yard of the Bell Inn, in Aldgate, having ridden seventy miles in eight and a half hours.

The identification of the adventurous girl in spite of her disguise, and her arrest on a charge of horse-stealing are matters of a few hours. After lying in Newgate and Ipswich gaol nearly three months, she is brought before Lord Chief Baron Macdonald at Bury Assizes, and condemned to death. Her demeanour at the trial, and the evidence of many friends, who are glad to testify to her previous good conduct, are not, however, without effect upon the court, and the judge promises to lay her case before the King, with a view to the commuting of her sentence to one of transportation. This is done as soon as the court rises, and in a few days a reply comes from the Home Office empowering the judge to deal with the case at his discretion. The sentence is commuted to one of seven years transportation; but much doubt is felt whether Margaret will really be sent to the new penal settlement at Botany Bay; it is considered highly probable she will serve her term in her own country. Until this is decided she is kept in Ipswich Gaol. There she remains nearly three years, and then, with the assistance of her lover Laud, who must have felt that he owed her much for the trouble he had brought her, effects her escape. They hope to be able to cross over in a smuggler's boat to Holland, and such a boat is to await them on Sudbourn beach. Just as the clock strikes midnight, Margaret lets her-



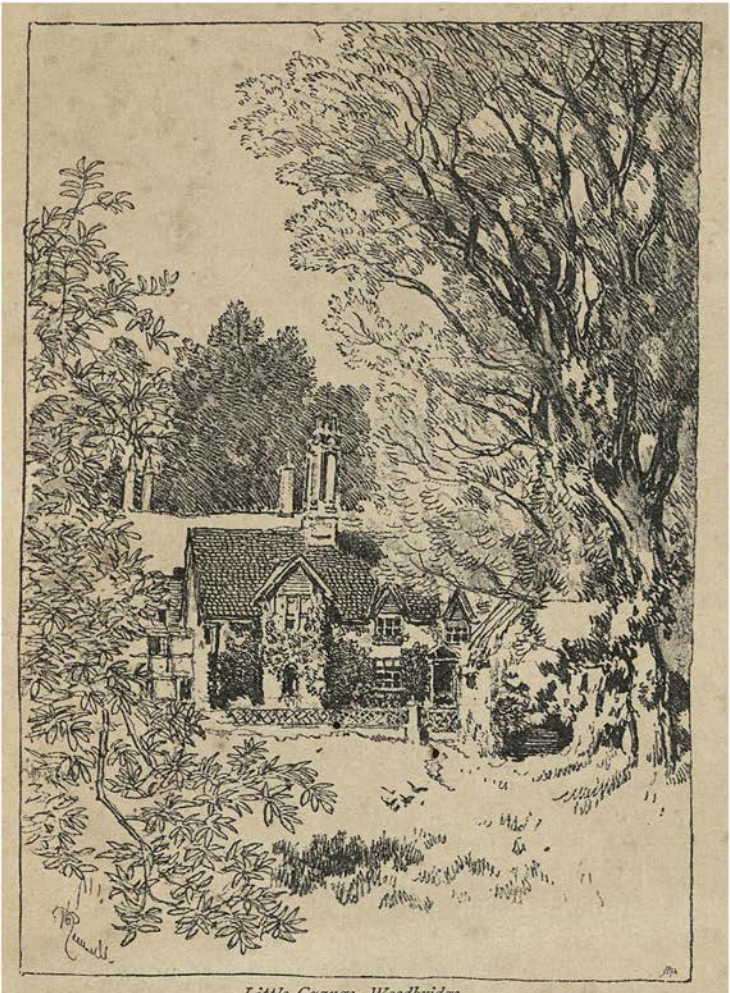
Woodbridge.

self down from the prison wall. Laud is near by, ready to guide her out of the town, and in a few minutes they are hastening together along this same Woodbridge road. In an

empty cartshed the girl puts on a seaman's garb, then strikes out by quiet byways and across lonesome waste lands for the sea. At Sudbourn, however, there are no signs of the longed-for boat, and in the meantime Margaret's escape has become known and the country is being scoured to find her. While she and her companion are still wandering about the beach, anxiously watching for the appearance of the boat which is to carry them to safety, Ripshaw, the Ipswich gaoler, and a constable surprise them, and a struggle ensues in which Laud is shot through the heart. Margaret is retaken, and lodged again in Ipswich Gaol. As her gallant ride ended in disaster, so her last hope of freedom and security in another land is banished by the welding of fresh fetters and the final tragedy of her lover's death.

I had no intention of lingering so long over Margaret Catchpole's story, and, indeed, there was little need that I should, for is it not all contained in the Rev. R. Cobbold's "romantic but perfectly true" chronicles? But I have been loitering on the Woodbridge road, amid scenes with which Margaret must have been familiar and which have tended to keep her story in my mind. Some of these ancient cottages and homesteads around Martlesham can have looked little less ancient when the high-spirited and unfortunate Suffolk girl was still in her native county; and Martlesham Red Lion—with its awe-inspiring sign, said to have been the figurehead of a Dutch warship which fought in the battle of Sole Bay—was a noted hostelry long before she was born. Anyhow, amid the scenes of her loving and daring she has been my companion for an hour to-day, and I wish Edward FitzGerald were alive, and in his old home at Woodbridge, so that I might go to him and tell him what an entertaining companion she has been.

For it is to Little Grange, "Old Fitz's" ivy-clad house, that I make my way even before visiting his favourite resort, the Bull Inn, or hunting up his old lodgings "over Berry the gunsmith's shop" on the Market Hill. There is no difficulty



Little Grange, Woodbridge.

in finding it. You ride along the main street of the town until you almost come to an end of the houses, then turn

sharply to the left at the top of the hill which slopes downward from the town. About a hundred yards down the branching road, on the left-hand side, is Little Grange, looking much the same as when FitzGerald left it. Except that it stands rather too close to the road, it seems an ideal home for a man who, while he loved to mingle with his fellow men, and found congenial companions even in the Bull Inn bar-room, was never so happy as when among his books. Here he enjoyed his "Book of Verses underneath the Bough"; and if there was no sweet human singer to make his wilderness "Paradise enow," no doubt the nightingales sang to him here in spring, and left him lamenting

> "That Spring should vanish with the Rose!
> That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!"

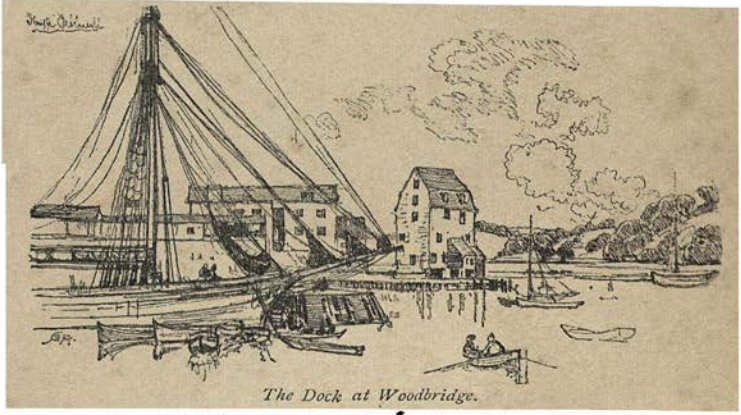
There are no nightingales singing around Little Grange to-day; but before many days have passed they will be back in their old haunts; and then "Old Fitz's" ghost should walk along the "quarter-deck" in front of the house, where, according to Mr. Hindes Groome, Charles Keene marched and played his bagpipes. "Old Fitz" is well remembered in Woodbridge, for even after he had given up his lodgings on Market Hill and betaken himself to this quiet retreat, he often strolled into the town, cutting a queer figure with his "old Inverness cape, double-breasted, flowered-satin waistcoat, slippers on feet, and a handkerchief, very likely, tied over his hat." He was looked upon as an eccentric, both here and at Lowestoft, where I am sure to hear of him again; and some strange stories are told of him. Mr. Groome has recorded how he sailed over to Holland (he was an enthusiastic yachtsman) with the intention of seeing Paul Potter's "Bull"; but on arriving there, and finding a suitable breeze blowing, set out at once on his homeward voyage; and again, how he started for Edinburgh, but on reaching Newcastle found a train about to leave for London, so took the opportunity of returning home. The Bull Inn—it still looks solid and

substantial, though much of its business departed with the mail coaches and post-boys—will always be noted for its association with the translator—or should it be, author—of the immortal quatrains. I wish its former landlord were alive, so that I might recall his old patron to his mind, and, maybe, hear

The Town Hall, Woodbridge.

some saying that might fitly be set down beside that famous one uttered when FitzGerald remarked to him that Woodbridge should feel highly honoured at being visited by Tennyson, who was a guest at Little Grange—"Daresay; but he didn't fare to know much about horses!"

This is a delightful little town—one of the prettiest little country market towns in England. Nestling on the slopes of what in Suffolk must be called a hilly district, the sun always seems to shine on it, and the gleaming Deben to love it for its beauty and woo it to its banks. Poets have always loved it. Tennyson, FitzGerald, Crabbe, Barton—I wonder if any one outside Suffolk ever reads the works of Bernard Barton, coal merchant, bank clerk, and poet, now—all rambled and mused in these narrow streets and leafy lanes, watched the big-sailed barges come creeping up the river, and listened to



The Dock at Woodbridge.

the music of the bird-haunted woods and lawns. I cannot imagine that Woodbridge played any active part in the stirring events of East Anglian history: it seems almost incredible that "in the old days" warships were built at its quiet quays. Yet the high road from Yarmouth to Ipswich and London runs through the heart of it, so many a horseman must have clattered through it in the days when the Norfolk and Suffolk rustics were in frequent revolt, and Princess Mary held her court at Framlingham, receiving there the assurances of loyalty of the devoted to her cause. So, the old town must always have been well in touch with the wider world, and

therefore always as satisfied with itself as it seems to-day. If only it were not so complacently—one might say selfishly—satisfied with itself and its surroundings, it might soon become one of those objectionable places, a popular resort; but, so far as I can see, it keeps all its good things to itself and shows no inclination to advertise them. This may be selfishness; but such selfishness, to my mind, nearly approaches being a virtue nowadays.

On my way to Wickham Market, which comes in sight long before Woodbridge and its charms are forgotten, I

Wickham Market.

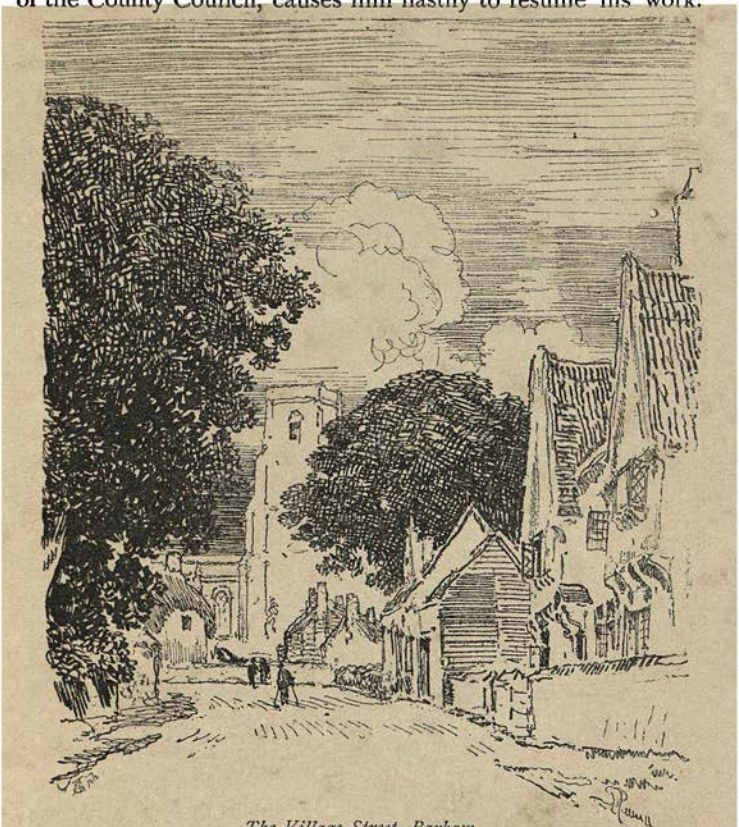
encounter an old road mender breaking flints by the roadside. One of the delays seemingly inevitable to cyclists brings him hobbling to my side, and while I am tinkering with my bicycle he entertains me with reminiscences. He will be eighty years old "come next October," he tells me, and can remember the time when the two-horse waggons which, before the era of railways, conveyed fish from Yarmouth and Lowestoft to "Lunnon," used to run to and fro along this road. He uses the dialect of the days when Board Schools were unheard-of institutions—speaks it in the sing-song fashion of Sely (happy)

Suffolk, so delightful to an East Anglian. He "kinder thowt as how we should hev some downfall afore night; an' his owd woman" (she was his third wife and fifteen years younger than himself) "wouldn't hear o' his goin' to work 'ithout a coverin'," and he points to a tattered military overcoat thrown down upon a stone heap. He "fared as how he'd sin my faace afore; but couldn't rightly say where. It might ha' bin when he wor a-shepardin' out Dunwich way, where all mander o' folks went to see th' ruins; but he might be wrong." The war in South Africa interested him a good deal; and he could "mind hearin' about owd Boney an' all th' trouble what follered" his escape from Elba. His father, who "come from out Dareham way,' was in the West Norfolk Militia "in his young time," and had kept him well informed on military matters and international disputes; but now he "couldn't fare to git a-howd o' th' right ends o' things." He was puzzled as to why the Boers were not black people, "seein' as he'd heerd Afriky wor a country o' blacks. Anyways, he orfen thowt about it till he fared right dunted." One thing only seemed clear to him—that there did not appear to be so much fear of the French coming over here as there was in his father's "young time." Then people used to make songs about the Frenchmen, and sing them everywhere. One song began

"The French are a-comin:
Oh dear, oh dear;
They're all owd women,
So we don't keer;"

but the "owd women" at home, especially those who dwelt near the coast, had sleepless nights when alarming rumours came down the London road with the mails, or the booming of guns betokened that the King's ships had sighted a suspicious sail. Apparently the old man is in the mood for a lengthy chat, which is not surprising, seeing that wayfarers are few about here, and seldom do more than "pass the seal of the day" with him; but the appearance of a dog-cart driven by an

individual who must be the road surveyor, or at least a member of the County Council, causes him hastily to resume his work.



The Village Street, Parham.

Wickham Market is a pleasant enough little place, mainly consisting, so far as I can see, of one long street; but I cannot discover that it is more picturesque or interesting than many more of the large villages in Suffolk which call themselves towns. So I content myself with noting that a considerable

section of the inhabitants has turned out of doors to gaze at a convulsive motor car; and leave them gazing. I do this with the less regret because I wish to see the old Moat Hall at Parham before daylight wanes; and though I know I shall pass through Parham on my way to Framlingham, I have received vague but disquieting information about the inaccessibility of the Willoughbys' old home. It has been described to me as an isolated house in the midst of fields, through which are only rough and rutty waggon tracks, and I have been told, too, that it is hidden from passers along the road by a dark grove of trees; but when I reach Parham, and make inquiries at an ancient inn where the bar-room ceiling is crossed by heavy adze-hewn beams, my disquietude is dispelled, and I set out light-heartedly for the mysterious fifteenth century, moated hall. Crossing a wooden footbridge to the right of the village street, passing the village church, and climbing a rather steep hill, on the crest of which the road curves to the right, I soon see the cart-track which leads to the hall. I have heard that the house is inhabited, that it is now a farmhouse; but not a human being is in sight anywhere near it; the ploughmen have left the fields, the farm buildings are deserted. Although the trees are still leafless, I do not get a glimpse of the hall until it is within a stone's throw, so hidden is it by a dense screen of boughs and underwood; but I know it is near at hand, for an ancient archway spans the path leading to the farmyard, and just beyond it is a fine Tudor gateway bearing several clear-cut coats of arms. Through the arch, too, I see the dark water of a deep wide moat; so dark, indeed, is the water that it might well have remained unstirred since the days of the "brave Lord Willoughby." When, at last, I reach the house, I am not so much impressed with it as with its surroundings. A good deal of the original building has been pulled down, and what is left scarcely suggests the ancient home of a famous family. If only a big water-wheel revolved in the moat, the Moat Hall would remind one of the old-fashioned water-mills

which still adorn the upper reaches of a few of our rivers. It is of earlier erection than the gateway, and its exterior is only interesting on account of its obvious antiquity. It ought to be a haunted house. The dark waters which lie close under its windows, and the dark copse in which it hides itself from the world, are suggestive of secret tragedies. Although dusk is approaching, not a light gleams from the windows, the birds are silent, save for a restless fluttering in the ivy; not a ripple stirs the surface of the moat, not a sound of life issues from the grim old hall.

The Moat Hall, Parham.

If there are no tragedies associated with the Moat Hall—and I cannot discover any—there was trouble enough in the life of Katharine Willoughby, whose father was Lord of Parham, and who, after the death of her first husband, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, married that Kentish reformer, Richard Bertie, who was one of the victims of Queen Mary's persecution of the Protestants. An Elizabethan ballad, entitled *The Duchess of Suffolk's Calamity*, tells of the hardships she endured when, with her husband, she was forced to flee to the Low Countries. There, if the ballad be true, they fell among thieves, and had

to beg their way from door to door. One night they sought refuge in the porch of St. Willebrord's church at Wesel, where the unfortunate duchess gave birth to the child who afterwards became the "brave Lord Willoughby." But even in the church they did not find sanctuary. The sexton arrived on the scene, and

> "The drunken knave, all void of shame,
> To drive then out was his desire:
> And spurning forth this noble dame,
> Her husband's wrath it did inflame.
>
> "And all in fury as he stood,
> He wrung the church keys out of his hand,
> And struck him so that all of blood
> His head ran down where he did stand;
> Wherefore the sexton presently
> For help and aid aloud did cry."

But the governor of the town, hearing of the refugees' sorry plight, took compassion on them; and when informed of the Duchess's identity treated them with "reverence great" and to "princely cheer," so that they were able to live in comfort until the accession of Queen Elizabeth, when they returned to England and lived happily ever afterwards. As for Peregrine Bertie, whose advent into the world took place under such unpropitious circumstances, he lived to distinguish himself greatly at the Siege of Zutphen, and become general of the English forces in the United Provinces. His skill and courage made him a popular hero. One of his chief feats of arms is thus commemorated:

> "The fifteenth day of July,
> With glistening spear and shield,
> A famous fight in Flanders
> Was foughten in the field:
> The most courageous officers
> Were English captains three;
> But the bravest man in battle
> Was brave Lord Willoughbèy.

" 'Stand to it, noble pikemen,
And look you round about;
And shoot you right, you bow-men,
And we will keep them out.
You musket and caliver men,
Do you prove true to me:
I'll be the foremost man in fight,'
Says brave Lord Willoughbèy.

" For seven hours, to all men's view,
This fight endurèd sore,
Until our men so feeble grew
That they could fight no more;
And then upon dead horses,
Full savourly they eat,
And drank the puddle water,
They could no better get.

" When they had fed so freely
They kneelèd on the ground,
And praisèd God devoutly
For the favour they had found;
And beating up their colours,
The fight they did renew,
And turning tow'rds the Spaniard,
A thousand more they slew."

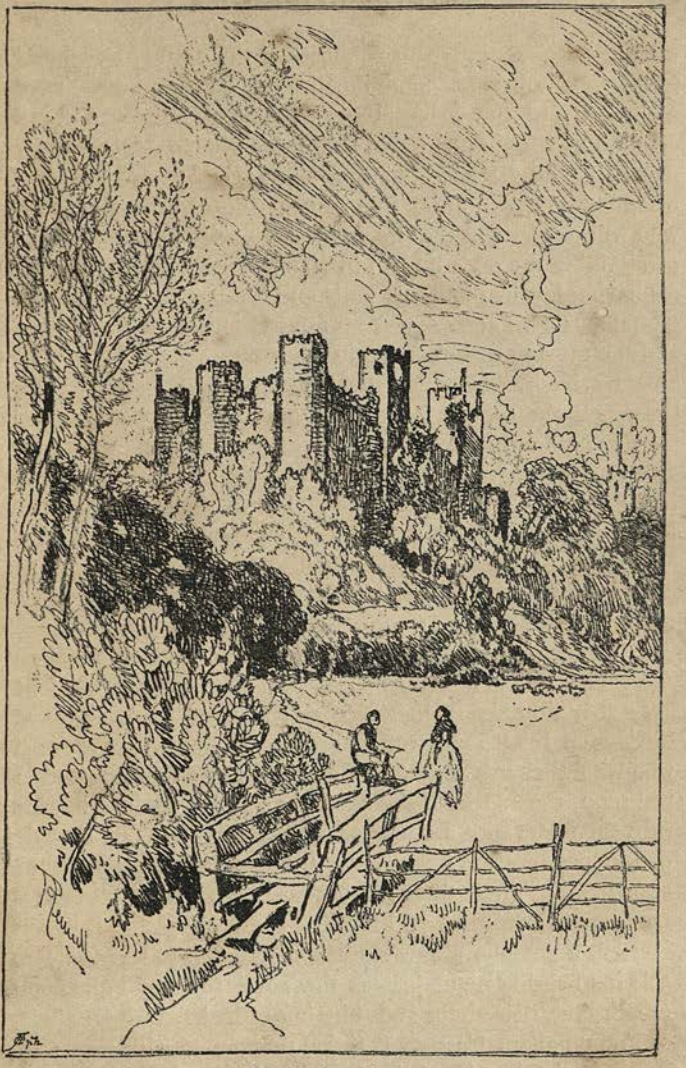
At last, finding that after many hours fighting there was no lessening of the shower of arrows and bullets which the Englishmen poured upon them, nor any possibility of standing longer against the fierce charges, the Spaniards wavered, and

" Then quoth the Spanish general,
'Come, let us march away;
I fear we shall be spoiled all
If here we longer stay;
For yonder comes Lord Willoughbey,
With courage fierce and fell;
He will not give one inch of way
For all the devils in hell!'"

And that was about the end of the fight; and the rest of the ballad relates to rewards and favours and the usual

laudations. It was all very pleasant reading to the contemporaries of the brave Lord Willoughby, and even now, after all the years which have elapsed since his death, and while Englishmen are filled with admiration for the endurance and fighting prowess of their modern horse-flesh-fed warriors, it stirs one's heart. It gives an added interest, too, to this lonely old hall, with which, however little he may have lived in it, the name of the "brave Lord Willoughby" will be associated so long as one of its bricks rests upon another.

While I am lingering over old-time battles and ballads, the dusk is deepening into night, and unless I hasten on to Framlingham my desire to see its famous castle before darkness enshrouds it will not be gratified. Even now the shadows which have lurked in the sombre copses around the old hall are gathering over the moat and creeping over the Parham fields; and by the time I reach the village street again the cottage windows are lamplit and the labourers are home from their work on the land. It promises to be a dark night; there is no moon, and clouds which drifted up from the west at sunset will hide the stars; but there is still light enough in the sky to let me distinguish the outlines of the castle when I ride up close under its walls. Gloomy and forbidding they look, and though raised little above the level of the neighbouring houses the latter are dwarfed by them. And well they may be, for this is one of England's largest castles, and might well be taken for a great baronial stronghold which has withstood intact the ravages of time. True, the drawbridge is gone, and a brick bridge over a dry moat now leads up to the gate tower; but seen in the waning daylight, walls and towers seem to have preserved their original form. So, indeed, they have; and it is only when you get within them, and see what destruction has been wrought there, that you realise that after all this is nothing more than the empty shell of a huge castle. Almost the whole of the space within the walls is open to the sky, and has remained so ever since the middle of the seventeenth century,



Framlingham Castle.

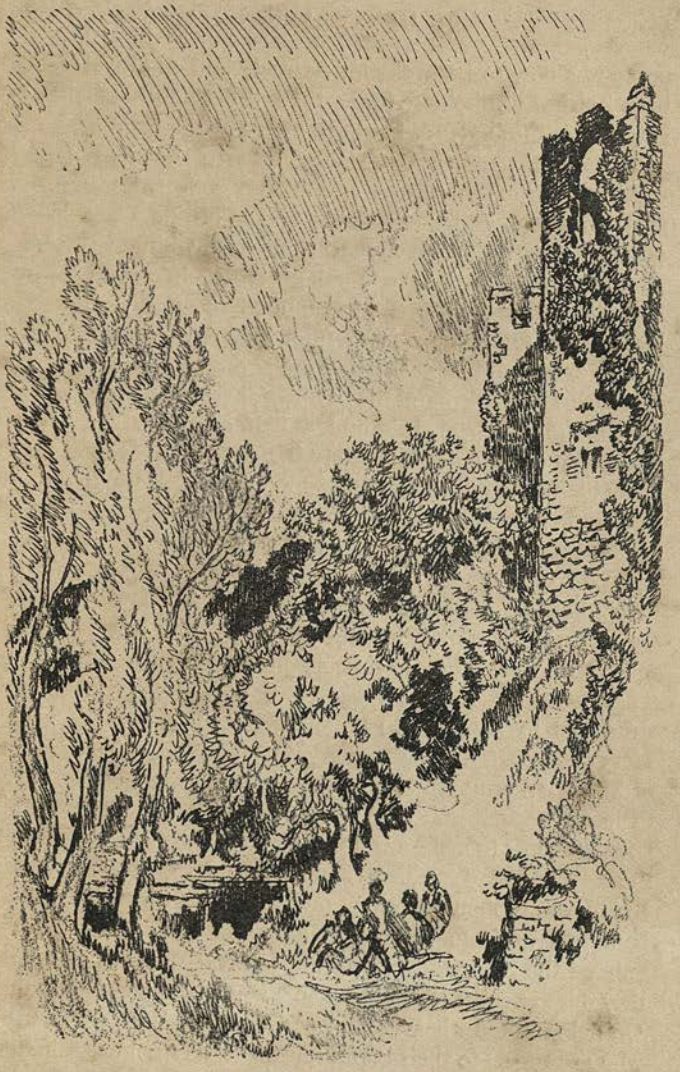
when Sir Robert Hitcham bequeathed the castle to Pembroke College, Cambridge, conditionally on its interior being demolished and the material thus obtained employed for the erection of certain charitable institutions. No doubt, the good man believed he was doing a praiseworthy deed when he inscribed this condition in his last will and testament; but who will not lament that he could not devise some other means of attaining the ends he had in view? Still, we may thank him for having left us the noble walls and towers, to remind us of the famous men and women who lived and died within them, and the moving scenes they witnessed in the stirring days of knightly deeds. Now that night is come, and, leaning against the gate-tower bridge, I have turned my back on the town, there is nothing, save the silence which reigns within the castle walls, to remind me that those brave old days are long gone by; I can revive them at will and with them the men who made them. In less than an hour a long procession of nobles and squires, knights and dames files before me and silently passes through the grim old gateway; and among them is a fugitive princess who is soon to become an English queen. Sir Thomas Erpingham, who led the English archers at Agincourt, makes a brave figure as he alights from his horse, his sturdy step almost belying time's furrows on his face and frost upon his "good white head." Thomas, Earl Mowbray, who with Richard Scroope, the fighting Archbishop of York, will soon lose his head for taking up arms against his king, rubs shoulders with a crowd of Bigods who, without regard to precedence or era, to-night seek rest and refuge in their Suffolk stronghold. Then there are Howards who were leaders and fighters at Bosworth and Flodden; and altogether it is a very martial, if ghostly, cavalcade which rides up to the castle gate this mild spring night just as the good folk of Framlingham are closing their shops and thinking of bed.

Framlingham Castle was thrice threatened with siege; twice when in the hands of the Bigods, who saved it by judicious

submission, and a third time when Princess Mary, fearful of the rejection of her claims to the throne, came here so that, should need arise, she might easily escape to Flanders. Yet in spite of its age and the brave reputation of many of its holders, it seems, like Norwich Castle, to have known little of actual warfare. When, in 1553, Princess Mary, soon to be England's first queen-regnant, held her court here, it saw a brave array of courtiers and men-at-arms, and, with the royal standard flying from its towers, entered upon a brief but eventful era of its history. Mary, who was at Hunsdon when King Edward died, started for London as soon as news of his death reached her; but hearing that there was danger in continuing her journey thither, she left the road to the metropolis and set out by way of Cambridgeshire for her manor of Kenninghall in Suffolk. She was accompanied by a retinue of cavaliers and ladies, all Roman Catholics and faithful adherents to her cause. At Sawston Hall, near Cambridge, she was hospitably entertained by Sir John Huddleston, a kinsman of one of her gentlemen, who welcomed her warmly, though well aware that her presence in his house would arouse the ire of the Protestant inhabitants of the neighbouring town. This, indeed, happened. The news that the Princess was at Sawston soon spread, and a party of Cambridge Protestants set out from the town, hoping to make her prisoner. But Mary was awake to the risks she ran. Before sunrise she had continued her journey to Kenninghall, disguised, some say, as a market-woman and riding behind Huddleston, who had donned one of his servants' livery. From the crest of the Gogmagog Hills she looked back and saw Sawston Hall in flames. Her enemies, baulked in their efforts to seize her, were burning the home of the friend of her need. Some members of her train lamented his loss; but we do not hear that he himself regretted what he had done; and Mary, as she gazed upon the burning hall, simply said, "Let it blaze; I will build Huddleston a better" —a promise she may have intended to keep, but which does

not seem to have been fulfilled, as the present hall at Sawston, though begun during her reign, was not completed until after her death. At Bury St. Edmunds she was received with royal honours, but only stayed long enough to partake of refreshment. The inhabitants, however, had not heard of Edward's death, and Mary, according to Bishop Godwin, explained to them that the shortness of her stay was due to an outbreak of plague in her Hunsdon household and her fear that some of her retinue might communicate it to the townspeople. So, no doubt, in spite of their professed loyalty, they were glad to be rid of her. She arrived at Kenninghall that night. From thence she addressed a letter to the Privy Council, promising them amnesty for their plottings against her, providing they at once proclaimed her queen. But the Council refused to consider her claims; told her she was only an illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII.; and proclaimed Lady Jane Grey queen.

Mary's position was critical; she might well despair of having her rights admitted and being raised to the throne. Penniless and without armed assistance, she was powerless to strike a blow on her own behalf; and although Jerningham and Bedingfield, two of her chief Norfolk supporters, came with their tenantry to protect her, they took care to impress upon her the hopelessness of thinking to hold Kenninghall against an armed force. So she decided to move nearer to the coast, where, if her enemies threatened, she could take ship and find refuge across the sea. Framlingham suggested itself as a suitable place of refuge. From its castle towers beacon signals could be flashed to Aldborough, the nearest seaport; the castle itself was one of the strongest in East Anglia. It slumbered peacefully in the midst of somnolent surroundings. Since the day when the Duke of Norfolk surrendered it to Henry VIII. no distinguished guests had entered its portals, nor had the jackdaws which nested in the crannies of its walls been disturbed by the rattle of musketry or the clash of arms. This brooding



The Moat at Framlingham.

peace was now to be broken. Scarcely had the royal standard been hoisted on the gate-tower than the Suffolk knights, who hated Northumberland, began to arrive at the town and castle and tender their aid to the hitherto helpless princess. Cornwallis, Shelton, Drury, and Tyrrel followed the example of Jerningham and Bedingfield; and in a little while an army of 13,000 men, all "voluntarily serving without pay," were encamped outside the castle walls. No such warlike gathering had ever before been seen at Framlingham, nor had the castle, though its foundation dates from the days of Redwald the Saxon, ever come so near being the scene of a serious conflict. The dense woods around the camp—for there were dense woods around Framlingham three and a half centuries ago—echoed the shouts of hunters whose duty it was to provide food for the men-at-arms; every road and woodland lane leading to the castle was guarded by sentinels devoted to the service of the princess whom they now looked upon as queen.

While the Suffolk knights were daily coming in, and, with their hinds, increasing the strength of Mary's army, the Privy Council took a step which, though it seemed a wise one, did much to bring them into ridicule and strengthen Mary's hand. They sent six ships of war to the Suffolk coast, with instructions to lay siege to Framlingham, or at any rate prevent Mary's escape from the country. When the ships were seen making for Yarmouth Roads, the Suffolk leaders began to ask themselves whether it were possible for a force armed with bills and pikes only to make any useful stand against troops possessing the advantage of artillery and all the best weapons of war. But they were soon relieved of their anxiety. Sir Henry Jerningham had gone to Yarmouth, and was there when the fleet entered the roadstead. With impudent daring, he, as soon as they were anchored, rowed out in a small boat and hailed them. On being asked what he wanted, he replied, "Your captains, who are rebels to their lawful queen." His boldness, if Speed may be believed, was not without its effect upon the sailors, who

are reported to have promptly responded, "If they are, we will throw them into the sea, for we are her true subjects." The captains evidently considered their position precarious, for they at once surrendered to Sir Henry, who took possession of the ships in the name of his royal mistress. About the same time a large force of militia stationed near London declared itself in favour of Mary's cause; while the Earl of Sussex and Bath seceded from the Privy Council and brought to Framlingham a considerable body of troops. The crews of certain warships in Harwich harbour followed the example of those at Yarmouth, and sent their ammunition to Framlingham for the use of Mary's men-at-arms.

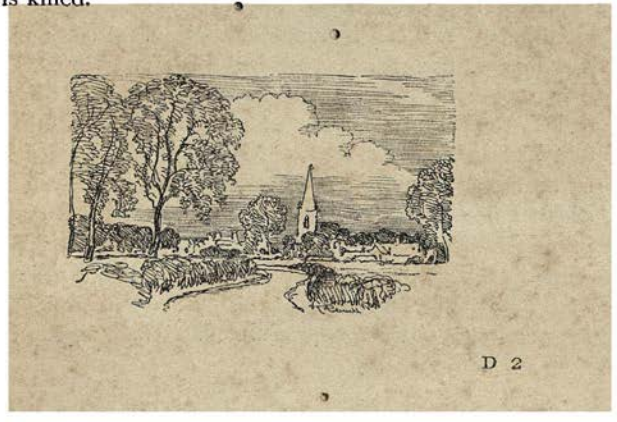
Meanwhile events were moving so rapidly and favourably in other parts of the kingdom that Mary's council had little doubt that their queen would soon come to her own. Northumberland, who was in command of the Protestant army at Cambridge, and who had at first threatened to besiege Framlingham, was so terror-stricken by the rumours which came to his ears that he sought to gain Mary's favour by proclaiming her the rightful queen; while in London a large section of the populace anxiously awaited an opportunity for declaring themselves her faithful subjects. As for Northumberland, the queen had little faith in his protestations of loyalty, so sent him, in company with Northampton and Bishop Ridley, to the Tower. Then, confident that she had nothing more to fear, she broke up her camp at Framlingham and set out for London. Her journey to the metropolis differed greatly from that from Hunsdon to Suffolk; for in less than a month a great change had come about in the feeling of the country. It was a triumphal procession. Everywhere the queen who had lately been a fugitive was received with acclamation. At Ipswich, Ingatestone, and Wanstead men who had been among her bitterest enemies hastened to do her homage; and when at length she passed through Aldgate into the city, children sang their greetings and the

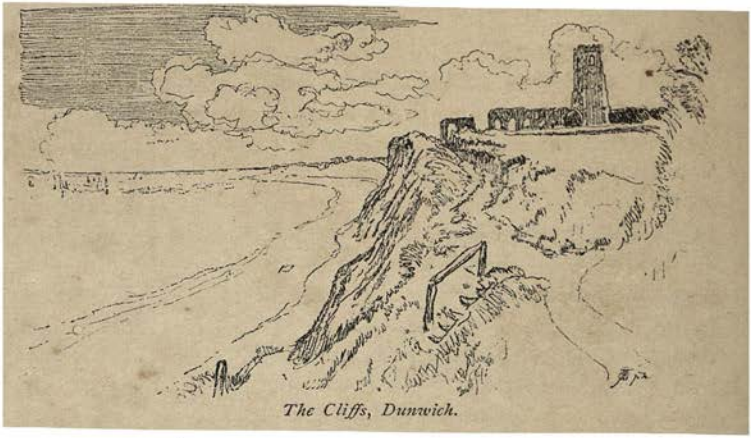
streets were a-flutter with flags and banners. But all this, and what followed, has nothing to do with Framlingham, which, after a brief spell of unwonted activity and importance, relapsed into its accustomed lethargy amidst its quiet woodland shades.

It seems not at all improbable that the fiercest fighting ever witnessed at the castle was between some famous East Anglian pugilists in the first half of the eighteenth century. For it was here that John Slack, the Norfolk champion, and John Smith, the Suffolk champion, fought in 1744. The encounter lasted only five minutes, and resulted in the Norfolk man's favour. Smith, however, was not content with one thrashing, as may be seen from an advertisement issued shortly after the fight, in which it is stated that, "At the Great Castle at Framlingham, Suffolk, on Monday, 12th November, there will be a severe trial between the following champions, namely —I, John Smith, the Suffolk champion, do once more invite Mr. John Slack, the Norfolk champion, to meet and fight me at the time and place aforesaid, for the sum of forty guineas; and though I had the misfortune to be defeated by him before, I am much his superior in the art of boxing, and doubt not but I shall give him and the company entire satisfaction." This challenge the Norfolk champion accepted, agreeing to "meet the above hero for the said sum at the time and place mentioned," and adding that he had no fear of being unable to "support the character he had hitherto maintained." His confidence was justified; Smith again "had the misfortune" to be defeated. I do not know how it came about that the castle was chosen as a fitting place for these encounters, for it was then, as now, in the possession of the Master and Fellows of Pembroke Hall. Can it be that the Master and Fellows were supporters of the "Science of Manhood"?

While on the subject of pugilism, a sport which George Borrow, who was himself what we in East Anglia call a "handy man with his fists," could never praise enough, I may

briefly refer to another prize-fight in which the before-mentioned Norfolk champion distinguished himself. Broughton's New Amphitheatre, London, was on this occasion the scene of the contest, and the Norfolk man had to meet John James—they were all Johns, it seems, those pugilists of a hundred and fifty years ago—who was the "most famous master of the science in London." But he was no match for the sturdy East Anglian, who defeated him in less than four minutes, "so that James will never more attempt to engage him, who is so much his Superior in Manhood and the art of Boxing." The fight, we are informed by *Crossgrove's Gazette*, was won by a blow, "for Mr. James, making a stroke at Mr. Slack" (there were no "Sharkies" and "Brummagem Pets" in those days: they were all "Misters") "received the same in guard with his right hand, and the same instant with his left hand gave Mr. James such a sharp blow or punch on the pit of his stomach as knocked him down for dead. The blow was so home" (the phrase is singularly expressive) "and effectual that Mr. James fell, to all appearance, as if he had been shot through his heart with a bullet; he sank down without staggering and lay motionless several minutes upon the stage, and without much appearance of life. . . . It is this day reported that it is thought Mr. James is killed."



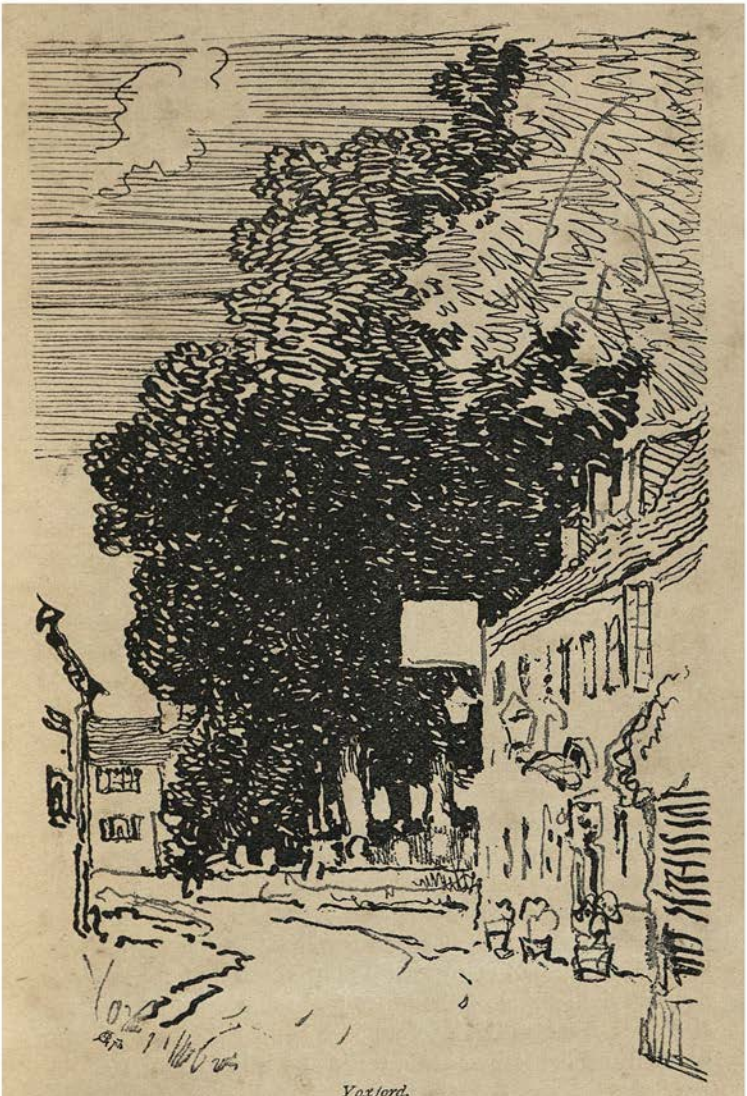


The Cliffs, Dunwich.

CHAPTER II

DUNWICH AND SOUTHWOLD

FOR an hour or more this morning I have loitered aimlessly about Yoxford, vaguely wondering why this particular district should be called the "Garden of Suffolk." I do not deny that Yoxford is a pleasant little village, nor that its surroundings are charmingly picturesque and pastoral; but the neighbourhood of Woodbridge equally deserves to be distinguished as the county "garden," and its beauty is enhanced by a river with which the insignificant Yox can bear no comparison. I suppose it is the park-like scenery, the comfortable old country houses in their well-groomed grounds, and the complacent little cottages with their half-acre patches of scarlet runners, cabbages, and potatoes that have earned for Yoxford its familiar name; but these are by no means confined to this particular part of Suffolk; they are common almost all over East Anglia. Or it may be that injudicious advertisement has had something to do with the district's flattering designation, and that if we had never heard of "Poppyland," Yoxford would have remained unknown and its mediocre charms unproclaimed. That, anyhow, was the



Yoxford.

opinion of a Framlingham shopkeeper, who, however, as he lived just outside the confines of the "garden," may have been jealous of its popularity. He told me an amusing tale of innocent pleasure-seekers, lured by the graphic word-painting of a famous journalist, coming with their friends and families to this Suffolk "haunt of ancient peace," and returning by the next train, indignant and mortified, because the place contained no lodging-houses and its inhabitants had not yet learnt that there was "money" in their rose-decked hedges and sunny pastures. But the Yoxford folk were not slow to realise that they had been "discovered," and the host of the Three Tuns has shown his fellow-villagers how to cater for the rustically-inclined citizen, who when he arrives at Yoxford finds that, like Brer Rabbit, they have learnt to "lay low and say nuffin" when the charms of their locality are enthusiastically described.

It may be said that I am treating Yoxford unfairly, and judging it by its early spring aspect; and that if I came here when the leaves are on the trees and the lanes fragrant with woodbine and eglantine I should alter my opinion of the place. But it happens that I have, as we say in Norfolk, "summered and wintered" the "Garden of Suffolk"; and while I cannot deny that it is a delightful district in early summer or when its fields are golden with corn, I cannot admit that it possesses unique attractions. One thing, however, is greatly in its favour, and to that is due my readiness to leave it! It is only a short distance from the Suffolk coast, and from that part of the coast where the ruins of desolated Dunwich brood sadly by the sea. To favourably compare Dunwich with Yoxford would, no doubt, strike the latter's inhabitants as a piece of impertinence; but there must be many people who would rather muse among the fallen masonry of the weather-beaten church on the cliff, and listen to the roaring of the waves that roll shoreward over the site of the vanished city, than idle amid the mowers in the hayfield and the reapers in the corn. So it is without any backward glances that I hasten over the few miles of winding road

between Yoxford and the sea; and as soon as the little village of Westleton is left behind me, and I enter upon a stretch of heathland road, all I can think of is the story of the wasted seaport to which I am bound. Like the tales of the Lost Atlantis and the mythical land of Lyonnesse, the story of Dunwich seizes upon the imagination; though when one sees how little remains of what may once have been the chief city of East Anglia it is difficult to believe that Dunwich, too, was not a phantom city of a land of dreams. Indeed, as one approaches the isolated but delightful little hamlet which now

Ruins near Peasenhall.

bears its name, the impression that the story is simply a myth becomes almost a conviction: it is only when you emerge from the cloister-like woodland footpath which skirts Grey Friars, the old home of men who for many years represented the now disenfranchised borough, and see the ruins of All Saints' church and the Franciscan convent on the wasting cliff, that you are willing to admit there may be something in it after all. Below, the sea frets the base of the cliffs: unsatisfied with its victories it still strives to dislodge from its precarious position the last of the old town's many shrines. Away to the north the coast takes a sickle bend, beyond which are the red roofs of South-

wold and its white lighthouse tower. Drawn up on the beach are half a dozen 'longshore boats—the only craft which now venture out from a place which sent out "barks" to the Iceland fishing, and warships manned by Dunwich men. Alone and neglected, with weeds of the wilderness growing freely amid its fallen stones, All Saints' still defies the winds and sea; but it has suffered sadly, and it cannot be long before the beachmen, after some stormy winter night, will go down to the shore and find that this church has gone the way of St. Leonard's, St. Martin's, St. Nicholas', and the rest of Dunwich's vanished churches. The ruins of the old convent, which, "flower-fondled, clasp'd in ivy's close caress," seem "allied with Nature yet apart," will last longer—some centuries longer, it may be—but their time, too, will come, and then there will be nothing left to tell of Dunwich's past glories except a few musty deeds and municipal seals. The sea, on still, sunny days, will show as calm a surface as it does to-day, untroubled by the secrets it holds; and when the storms rave and the sea roars the only laments for the lost city will be the mournful voice of the wind among the fir trees and the wailing of the wind-blown gulls.

Let me try and glean some grains of truth from the luxuriant crop of legends and traditions harvested by the old-time chroniclers. It will be no easy task, for the traditional splendour of Dunwich appealed to the imagination of the old historians, whose pages not only reflect it, but intensify its marvels and glories. Nothing would please me better than to be able to believe that there was a time when Dunwich possessed sixty churches—a greater number than even Norwich, the "City of Churches," can boast; but I can find definite mention of less than a dozen, and of these only All Saints', this desolate ruin on the cliff, remains. Still, it was as an ecclesiastical centre that the Dunwyk of the Saxons became renowned. When Felix of Burgundy, in prompt response to the appeal of Sigebert, King of the East Angles,

came over to England, it was here that he made his way almost as soon as he landed on the Norfolk coast. It must have been some time about the middle of the seventh century that he began his work among the East Anglian pagans whose benighted condition had stirred the heart of their Christian king, for when Sigebert made him bishop of East Anglia, he was consecrated by Archbishop Honorius. Felix died in 647—Godwinus tells us the exact day, the eighth of March—and it may have been that the demands of his large diocese were too much for his strength and shortened his life; for when, in

Peasenhall.

699, Bisus was appointed to the see, he soon found it impossible to minister satisfactorily to both the North folk and the South folk. So he divided his diocese into two parts, and gave Norfolk a see at North Elmham, where it remained until Herbert de Lozinga came over with the Conqueror, and removed it to Norwich. As to the Suffolk bishopric, it seems to have been reunited with that of Norfolk about 870, when Dunwich was deprived of its ecclesiastical importance. When one remembers that it was Felix who brought Christianity into East Anglia, and that Dunwich was the centre from which the

great new influence spread, it seems a pity that the pages of Bede, William of Malmesbury, and Godwinus tell us so little concerning that great event. Missionary enterprise was not widely advertised in Saxon times.

Episcopal dignity alone would never have made Dunwich famous. It was its position on the coast and its fine harbour (how utterly gone!) which gained it wealth and prosperity. Some idea of how great was that prosperity can be formed when we read that Dunwich had to pay an "aid" three times as large as that of Ipswich when a daughter of Henry II. was married. By that time it was as important a port as any on the coast; it carried on a considerable maritime trade with France, and was strongly fortified. Its approaches were "howsed over and strongly gated," so that "the towne was of grete forse and strong enowghe to keep out a greate number of people." It was looked upon, indeed, as impregnable. A manuscript in the British Museum states that "Robert, Earl of Leicester, which took pte with Henry, the sonne of King Henry the Second, came to the said towne of Dunwich, to have taken it against the King. But when he came neere, and beheld the strength thereof, it was terror and feare unto him to behold it; and soe retyred both he and his people." That the town could be as active in attack as it was strong in defence was proved in the reign of Henry II., when the "men of Dunwich, at their own proper costs and charges, built, for the defence of the realm, eleven ships of war, well furnished with munition, most of them carrying seventy-two men each, the rest fifty, forty-five, and forty, apiece. These sailed from the port of Plymouth with the King's brother, Edmund, Earl of Leicester and Lancaster, and other true loyal subjects, for France; and remained on the coast of Gascony from St. Andrew's day unto the feast of Pentecost following, during which time they served the King without pay, and had four ships with their artillery . . . taken and destroyed by the enemy."

The manuscript in the British Museum was written in 1573,

and is addressed to a "Master Deye," whom Suckling conjectures to have been that John Day, a native of Dunwich, who was the first English printer to use a Saxon type. Master Deye, dwelling amid the wasting relics of a vanished glory, seems to have set his mind upon publishing a history of his native town, and to have asked some one, Suckling thinks it was Stow, to supply him with useful facts. This the author of the manuscript did, in a detailed and circumstantial manner. We learn from him that Dunwich contained six parish churches, four of which were "drowned in the sea," but the other two, All Saints' and St. Peter's, were standing at the time of his writing. Then there were houses of Grey friars and Black friars, "verie fayer churches and byldings"; and an "aunchent and verie old church called the Temple, the which church by report was in the Jews tyme"; also two hospitals, one of which, that of St. James, was "greatly decayed and hendred by evyle masters." Three chapels, which were "putt down" when other religious houses were suppressed; and the Bridge, Middle, Gylding, St. James', and South gates seem to have exhausted the unknown historian's knowledge of the town's noted buildings; but he was able to add some curious information concerning the mayors and baillies, arms, mint, and fortifications, and even describe how when St. John's church was taken down, and a great stone in the chancel raised, the workmen came upon the remains of "a man lyeing with a payer of bottes upon his legges, the fore part of the feet of them peicked after a straunge fayshen, and a payer of chalice of course mettal lyinge upon his breste, the whyche was thought to be one of the bysshoppes of Donewyche, but whan they touched and stered the same dead bodie, it fell and went all to powder and doste."

Long before this curious and quaintly-worded document was written, the sea's siege of the coast had had disastrous effect upon Dunwich. In the year when Edward III. came to the throne the port was for a time rendered useless; and in 1328

it was so choked with sand that all efforts to clear it were in vain. As the years went by destruction was wrought by and desolation followed almost every winter gale which, lashing the waters of the grey North Sea, created an irresistible surf-scour at the base of the crumbling cliffs. One after another the churches of St. Leonard, St. Martin, and St. Nicholas went down cliff; in 1570, after St. John's had been taken down that something might be saved from the insatiable sea, Gilden Gate, South Gate, and other buildings disappeared beneath the waves. The bitter cry of distressed Dunwich reached the ears of Queen Elizabeth, who was "crediblie enformed that the Queene's Majesties towne of Dunwytche . . . . is by rage and surgies of the sea, daylie wasted and devoured; and the haven of her highnes said towne by diverse rages of wyndes continually landed and barred, so as no shippes or boates can either enter in or oughte, to the utter decay of the said towne, which heretofore hathe well and fayethfullie served her Majestie, and her noble progenitors, by navigacion in tyme of war, and the commonwelth in tyme of peace." Such loyalty and faithful service the Queen could not allow to pass unrecognised, more especially now that troublous times had come upon her dutiful subjects. What could she do? Her mind was soon made up, and her munificence is seldom forgotten by Suffolk historians. She ordered that the proceeds of the sale of the bells, lead, iron, glass, and stone of Ingate church, and the lead from the chancel of Kessingland church, "excepting so much as would defray the expense of building a gable to the same," should be *lent* to the inhabitants of Dunwich to help them to recover from their losses! Strange to say, the queen's lavish grant was as useless to prevent the decay of Dunwich as the word of an earlier monarch had been to stay the swelling of the sea tide. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the old residence of the Knights Templars went the way of the vanished churches. A little later the sea reached the market place,

and the market cross had to be pulled down ; and then all one side of a street was washed away. In December, 1740, when a terrible storm blew from the north-east, further damage was done. The remains of St. Nicholas' churchyard, the road that led from the quay to the town, the Cock and Hen hills, and King's Holm were destroyed or submerged, and the inhabitants of the town may well have thought that for them at least the end of all things was at hand. After the storm had blown itself out and the sea returned to its accustomed bounds, some strange sights were seen by people who went out to gaze upon the havoc wrought. The scour of the surf had

Walberswick.

uncovered much of the old Dunwich which lay under the wind-raised sand-hills. The foundations of St. Francis' Chapel came to light again, as also did the remains of an ancient aqueduct, so that local antiquaries were able to amuse themselves with reconstructing portions of the old town. But the children must have dreamed on many succeeding nights of the grim skeletons which lay in rows where the waves had found them or scattered mercilessly about the beach.

And now, as I stand by the weather-beaten church on the cliff, I can scarcely realise that old Dunwich is so completely gone. It seems rather that I must have mistaken my bearings and arrived at some other lonesome seaboard hamlet; and

that if only I went a little further north or south I should hear the songs of sailors on the old quays, the voices of merchants in the market place; and see streets thronged with the cosmopolitan crowd of a busy port. It is almost inconceivable that the Dunwich which struck "terror and feare" into the hearts of its enemies has, like Atlantis, sunk into the sea. But the sea has gained so many victories along this coast that after all it is not so very wonderful that it has won old Dunwich to itself. After withstanding centuries' incessant siege, it is more wonderful that there was any one left to be alarmed by an incident which occurred here not quite a hundred years ago, and which I will recount before leaving the

The Road to Walberswick.

scanty ruins and few cottages which call themselves Dunwich to their loneliness.

It was a little after midnight of a day in March, 1808, and the good people of Dunwich—they were mostly fishermen and farm-hands then—were sound asleep in their beds. Suddenly they were awakened by the firing of heavy guns, and thinking some vessel was in distress, they donned their clothes and hurried down to the shore. They were soon undeceived; for while the firing continued "the noise of cannon-balls passing through the air was distinctly heard." There could be only one explanation of this nocturnal bombardment: the French, with whom we were at war, had sent an invading army to England and it was about to land! Until dawn there was dire

alarm. Lights shone from windows which in the early hours of the morning were usually dark; and the Dunwich men set about collecting their goods and chattels and finding places of safety for their families. Strangely enough, with the lighting up of the windows the firing ceased; but a few men who went down to the beach were able to distinguish a large vessel, from which the shots had come, sailing away from the shore, while a smaller vessel, "something like a Berwick smack," crept along towards the north, closely hugging the shore. "If," says Suckling, "the vessel had continued firing, the next shot would have probably come into the midst of the inhabited houses, and caused destruction of property, if not of life. One

Walberswick.

shot, after striking the ground twice, and furrowing it up for a considerable distance, had passed through a stack of wood and one wall of Mr. Barne's stable." A stirring event, indeed, to people who lived in an out-of-the-way coastline village, and had forgotten that their ancestors were among the most loyal and ardent defenders of the realm "in tyme of war!" It would be something to boast of for a long time, that they had been roused from their beds in the middle of the night by the first indications of an approaching invasion. In the morning some of them assisted in a novel hunt—for cannon-balls. It would have been better if they had contented themselves with hearing them whistling over their heads. For when they

found them they proved to have come "from the stores of the King of England, being marked with the broad arrow." Then the people of Dunwich felt that there was something even better than boasting of a midnight bombardment, and that was to possess a genuine grievance. An Admiralty inquiry, at which the logs of all ships stationed near the East coast were examined, failed to discover that any shots had been fired anywhere near the coast at the time of the Dunwich scare. Of course! But the cannon-balls were kept at Dunwich for many years, and they must have come from somewhere!

Walberswick.

There are wild flowers already in bloom on this wind swept cliff; but it is too early yet to find that "simple little flower" which the monks are said to have planted around the old priory. Yet every one about here has heard of

> "the Dunwich rose, with snow-like blossom,
> Soft, pure, and white as is the cygnet's bosom;"

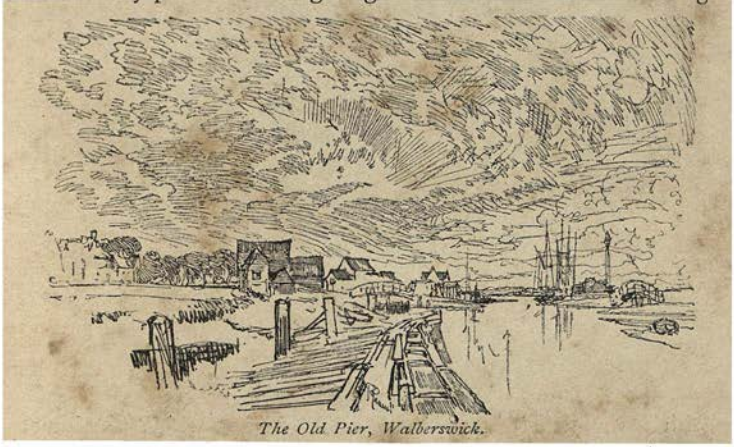
which

> "decks the stern and sterile cliff; and throws
> O'er its rough brow new beauty where it grows."

If it were June I might, perhaps, have the good fortune to find it; and somehow I fancy it would prove to be the

beautiful little burnet rose, which, with its lovely petals and daintily fretted leaflets, is not uncommon here by the sea. Hind, in his *Flora of Suffolk*, records it for Dunwich; and I have found it not far from the ivy-clad ruins of the old monastery.

Still pondering over the desolation and decay of Dunwich, and trying to picture it as it was when its "strong walls and brazen gates enclosed a king's court, a bishop's palace, a mayor's mansions," I take to the road again. I could find a melancholy pleasure in lingering until dusk on the crumbling



The Old Pier, Walberswick.

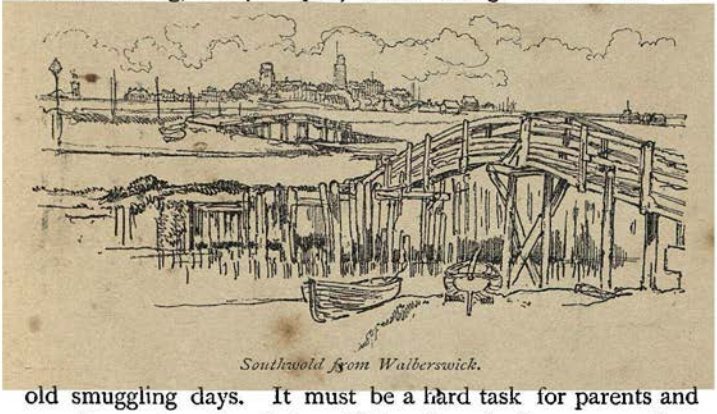
cliff and thinking of what lies beneath the calm blue sea which laps its base; but I do not care to let night overtake me on the rough roads which lead from Dunwich to Walberswick. It is a lonesome neighbourhood through which these roads run—a desolate stretch of plover-haunted heathland, with here and there an ancient cottage which seems more like a natural excrescence of the soil than a human habitation—but the blossoming gorse just now brightens it, and the fir plantations, sombre as they are, relieve its barren monotony. This relief is intensified when, after rounding a bend in the road, I see a

pleasant expanse of lowland, to which the land slopes down from the heath road, drowsing in the waning sunlight. A small stream, with cattle grazing on its banks, winds through this quiet, level pasture land, and within sight, though I leave it on my left as I ride towards Southwold, is the far-famed church of Blythburgh, a building of almost cathedral proportions. Presently, after a heathland farmstead is passed, another church comes in sight, a ruined shrine which in its perfect state must have been nearly as large as Blythburgh. I know now that I have reached Walberswick, a quaint little village

Walberswick Ferry.

with many delightfully picturesque cottages, which not long ago attracted so much attention in art circles as to almost lead to the founding of a Walberswick school of artists. I suppose its charms were too soon exhausted for its fame to become permanently established. It seems almost deserted, though there are signs of preparation for summer visitors: until I reach the old ferry which connects it with Southwold I do not see a human being nor hear a human voice. Even then I only see the ferrymen, who emerge, with the air of newly-awakened Rip Van Winkles, from their wooden shelter. Apparently there are few travellers along this road except in the holiday

season, and I feel in a quite apologetic mood when I step on board the big pontoon and it is set moving for my sole benefit. Once across the river, I am in the midst of a curious colony, consisting of a marvellous collection of wooden huts of all shapes and sizes, in which the Southwold beachmen and 'longshore fishermen are busy net-mending, sail-tanning, and boat-repairing. All along one side of the road are these strange shanties, filled with briny and tarry sea stores and the flotsam and jetsam of many a winter's gale. This is the place to hear all the yarns of wreck and rescue along the coast that are worth hearing, and, maybe, some strange stories of the

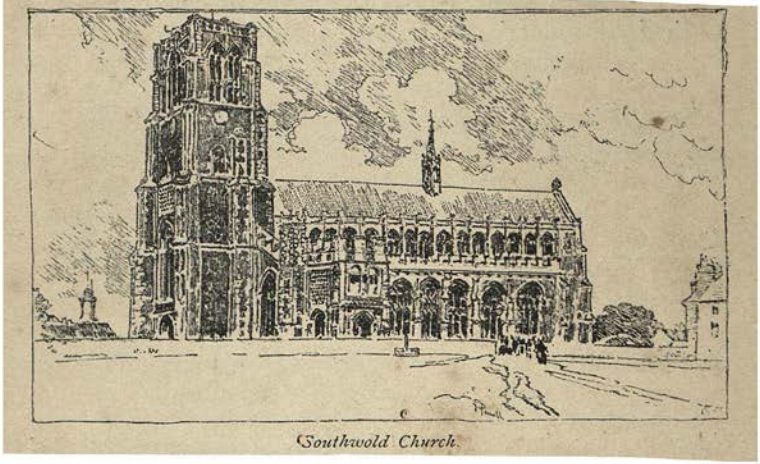


Southwold from Walberswick.

old smuggling days. It must be a hard task for parents and guardians, when they bring children here in the summer-time, to get them away from these queer old sheds and their ruddy-cheeked, weather-beaten occupants.

At Southwold is another of the fine churches for which the district is remarkable; but by the time I enter the town it is too dark to distinguish more than the outlines of the tower which looms above the roofs of the houses. As I grope my way through the dimly-lighted streets, I remember that nearly two centuries ago Defoe arrived here by just the same route that I have followed. He says he found "little remarkable on

this side of Suffolk, but what is on the seashore"; and not being interested in the grand churches of Blythburgh and Walberswick he gave his attention to a natural history problem which even now is not wholly solved. He came to Southwold at the beginning of October, and lodged in a house overlooking the churchyard. "I observed in the evening," he says, "an unusual multitude of birds sitting on the leads of the church. Curiosity led me to go nearer to see what they were, and I found they were all swallows; that there was such an infinite



Southwold Church.

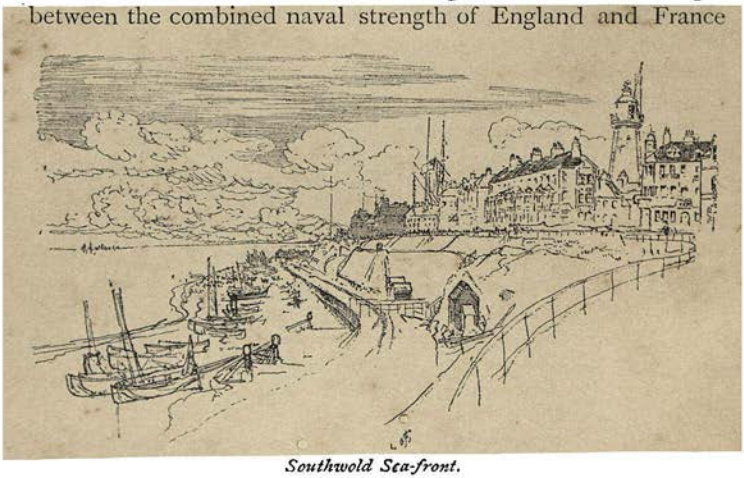
number of them that they covered the whole roof of the church, and of several houses near, and perhaps might of many houses which I did not see. This led me to inquire of a grave gentleman whom I saw near me, what the meaning was of such a prodigious multitude of swallows sitting there. 'Oh, sir,' says he, turning towards the sea, 'you may see the reason; the wind is off sea.' I did not seem fully informed by that expression, so he goes on, 'I perceive, sir,' says he, 'you are a stranger to it. You must then understand that this is the season when the swallows, their food here failing, begin to

leave us, and return to the country, wherever it be, from whence I suppose they came; and this being the nearest to the coast of Holland, they come here to embark: (this he said smiling a little); and now, sir,' says he, 'the weather being too calm or the wind contrary, they are waiting for a gale, for they are all windbound.' This was more evident to me when in the morning I found the wind had come about to the north-west in the night, and there was not one swallow to be seen of near a million, which I believe was there the night before." And then Defoe goes on to ask how the swallows knew Southwold to be the best point for them to start from when they set out on their long flight across the sea; but this, as we say in East Anglia, "I must leave."

In the early morning, as a slight tribute to a pertinacity in historical research uncommon in woman, I stroll into the churchyard and pause a while by Agnes Strickland's tomb. The Stricklands, especially the three literary sisters, were well known in Southwold in the early years of the nineteenth century. Reydon Hall, their old home, is only a little way out of the town. It was, in their time, a damp and dismal old house, scantily furnished within and whitewashed without; and, if report speaks true, the earnings of the clever sisters were very welcome to help eke out a slender income and add a few comforts to the bare necessaries of life. Yet I doubt whether Agnes Strickland was ever fully repaid for the years of labour her *Queens of England* cost her. Her sister Kate, who went to Canada and wrote of the wild, rough life of the backwoods' settlers; and her sister Jane, who also emigrated and was fairly successful as a novel writer, probably found greater satisfaction in their publishers' letters. But Agnes's should have been the sweeter success!

Leaving the churchyard I ramble down to the beach, and watch the little 'longshore boats in which the fishermen—most of them, it seems to me, Hurrs—are putting out into Sole Bay. It is a clear, warm morning, and I can imagine no

more peaceful sea than that which soundlessly laps the shingly shore. Here and there a beachman strolls aimlessly among the drawn-up boats; now and again a seagull utters a shrill cry; but the life of the little town is so listless that scarcely a murmur of it steals down the low cliffs. Far different must have been the scene here on that day, the 28th of March, 1672, when the Southwold folk, aroused from their accustomed lethargy by the sight of a host of strange sails on the sea, flocked down to the shore and saw a great naval battle fought between the combined naval strength of England and France



Southwold Sea-front.

and the famous De Ruyter's Dutch fleet. Dunwich, too, had its share in the excitement, and one of its townsmen has left a metrical account of how

> "One day as I was sitting still
> Upon the side of Dunwich hill,
> And looking on the ocean,
> By chance I saw De Ruyter's fleet
> With Royal James's squadron meet;
> In sooth it was a noble treat
> To see that brave commotion.

"I cannot stay to name the names
Of all the ships that fought with James,
Their number or their tonnage;
But this I say, the noble host
Right gallantly did take its post,
And cover'd all the hollow coast
From Walderswyck to Dunwich.

"The French, who should have joined the Duke,
Full far astern did lay and look,
Although their hulls were lighter;
But nobly faced the Duke of York,
(Though some may wink and some may talk)
Right stoutly did his vessel stalk
To buffet with De Ruyter.

"Well might you hear their guns, I guess,
From Sizewell Gap to Easton Ness,
The show was rare and sightly;
They battled without let or stay
Until the evening of that day,
'Twas then the Dutchmen ran away,
The Duke had beat them tightly.

"Of all the battles gain'd at sea
This was the rarest victory
Since Philip's grand armada;
I will not name the rebel Blake—
He fought for Horson Cromwell's sake,
And yet was forced three days to take
To quell the Dutch bravado.

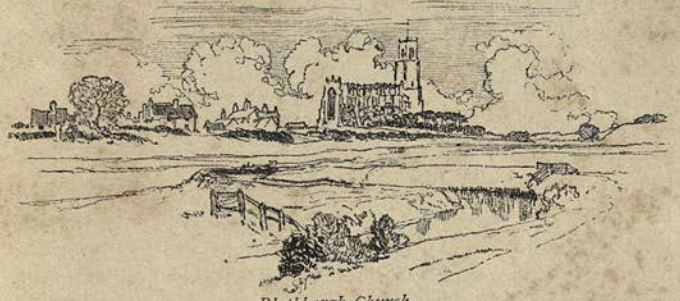
"So now we've seen them take to flight,
This way and that, where'er they might,
To windward or to leeward.
Here's to King Charles, and here's to James,
And here's to all the captains' names,
And here's to all the Suffolk dames,
And here's the House of Stuart."

Only garbled accounts of the stirring events which led to the appearance of the Dutch fleet—of the attack upon the Smyrna ships by Sir Robert Holmes, whose action many people condemned as thievish and dishonourable,—can have reached

easternmost England. The allied fleets of England and France, numbering in all 101 ships, first anchored in Sole Bay: the Dutchmen's attack was of the nature of an unpleasant surprise. For De Ruyter's fleet of 91 men-of-war, 54 fire-ships, and 23 tenders, came down upon them while they were close to the shore, and many of them had to cut their cables to get into line of battle. The Frenchmen proved almost useless allies, Admiral D'Etrée's squadron, when attacked by Bankert, who commanded the van of the Dutch, making little show of fight and soon sheering off, leaving the English and Dutch to settle the matter for themselves. This action, however, was not attributed to cowardice on the Frenchmen's part, but to secret orders from their king, telling them not to expose his ships, but let the English and Dutch do their best to bring about their mutual destruction.

In the meantime De Ruyter had borne down upon the centre squadron, and Admiral Van Ghent had furiously attacked the Earl of Sandwich's ships. For several hours the *Royal James* was in the thick of the fight, and especially in conflict with the *Great Holland*, commanded by Captain Brankel. Stripped to the waist the crew fought desperately; even when surrounded by the enemy's ships, and grappled by the *Great Holland*, they succeeded in getting their vessel clear. By this time two-thirds of her men were killed; and when the Earl saw a Dutch fire-ship approaching, he begged his captain, Sir Richard Haddock, and his sailors, to man the boats and escape to some other ship, or the shore. But many of the seamen refused to leave their gallant commander; and when the fire-ship set the *Royal James* alight they worked indefatigably by his side to subdue the flames. All their efforts were in vain. About noon the brave flagship, a battered and blazing wreck, drifted towards Easton Ness, where she blew up and all on board perished. Meanwhile the Duke of York had been warmly engaged with the two divisions of De Ruyter and Bankert, and, owing to his ship being disabled, had been

obliged to shift his flag to another vessel. He had, however, wrought great havoc among the enemy, whose admiral, De Ruyter, was wounded. Still the fight went on till sunset, and, in spite of what the ballad-writer says, the honours, at the end of the day, were about evenly divided. The Dutch had lost three men-of-war, one captured, another sunk, and a third burnt; and their losses in men were very great, though, like those of their descendants in South Africa, their publication was forbidden by the state. On the English side 2,000 men were slain, and six ships lost; but as a set off against these heavy casualties, the enemy had been compelled to retreat, greatly to the relief, no doubt, of the Southwold folk, who, all



Blythburgh Church.

day, had been dodging cannon-balls, and watching the fight from the cliffs. England's greatest loss that day was the gallant Earl of Sandwich, whose body was recovered by one of the king's ketches. There were those who said he threw his life away by refusing to leave his disabled ship. Whatever view be taken of his action, there is no doubt about his having been a brave man.

It is midday before I start for Lowestoft, for, having an hour or two to spare, I take an inland ride to Blythburgh, to look again upon the church which I had not time to examine closely last night. It is a building which no one interested in church architecture can afford to miss seeing; but I will not attempt to

describe it. All the adjectives applicable to beautiful old churches have already been lavished upon it. Suckling says of it: "Few ecclesiastical structures in this kingdom possess a juster claim to unqualified admiration than Blythburgh church, a fabric splendid amidst decay and desolation." The journey to Lowestoft is an easy one. On my way thither I pass through Wrentham. Even in this dull little village there is something to tempt me to loiter; but I have made up my mind to let nothing delay me until I reach the place which calls itself the Queen of Eastern Watering-places. By turning aside to the right of the village street, I should find myself in Covehithe, where another grand old ruined church stands lonely by the sea; but I resist the temptation, and do not even stay to ascertain whether Wrentham is able to live up to the reputation bestowed upon it in 1667, when a certain Mr. Samuel Baker, of Wattisfield Hall, wrote: "I was born at a village called Wrentham, which place I cannot pass by the mention of without saying this much, that religion has there flourished longer, and that in much piety; the gospel and grace of it have been more powerfully and clearly preached, and more generally received; the professors of it have been more sound in the matter, and open and steadfast in the profession of it in an hour of temptation, have manifested a greater oneness amongst themselves, and have been more eminently preserved from enemies without (albeit they dwell where Satan's seat is encompassed with his malice and rage), than I think in any village of like capacity in England."

A glimpse of a square old hall just outside the village recalls a worthy saying of a worthy gentleman who nearly two hundred years ago was Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia. He was walking, in company with a friend, in the main street of Williamsburgh, and returned the salute of a passing negro. "Does your Honour condescend so much as to salute a slave?" was the question put to him. "Why, yes; I cannot suffer a man of his condition to exceed me in good manners." It was Sir

William Gooch who made this reply; and the Gooches lived for many years at Benacre Hall. A bend in the road, however, soon takes me out of sight of their old home, and having crossed a stretch of marshland opening out towards the sea, and climbed the hill which leads up to Kessingland, I have not far to go to England's easternmost port. Before the roadside hedgerows, in which the sparrows are chirping and the

Boats coming into Lowestoft.

chaffinches spinking, give way to suburban terraces, the trawlers are seen dipping towards the harbour, while beyond the network of shoals off Lowestoft Ness the smoke trails of steamships blur the far horizon. For a time I must exchange sweet country scents for the briny odours of fish-wharves, birds' songs for the clatter of fish-barrows and the clangour of the fish-salesman's bell.

Fishing Boats, Lowestoft.

CHAPTER III

LOWESTOFT AND FRITTON LAKE, YARMOUTH AND BREYDON WATER

Now it happens that I know Lowestoft as well as most men know places in which they have lived for several years, and if it were fitting I might not only give a summary of the chief events in its history, but entertain some readers with the vagaries of its town council and the humours of its craving for royal visits. I might say a good deal, too, about its ordinary summer aspect when Clapham and Brixton are primly disporting themselves on the south beach or placidly promenading the pier. A whole book, too, might be written about Lowestoft's rivalry with Yarmouth, which commenced centuries ago with quarrels about the herring fishery, and is continued to-day in carping criticisms of the merits of the towns' respective visitors, boisterous assertiveness on one side being met by smug complacency on the other. But I doubt whether any one outside Lowestoft is interested in its municipal mummeries and parochial squabbles. I fancy most people would rather learn whether Lowestoft can claim their attention by some more stirring events than are

recorded in its council minutes, and would like to know whether it has any associations calculated to cast a glamour over its somewhat oppressive modernity. So I will glance through the records of its historians, and see whether, from a litter of dry deeds and other musty documents, I cannot discover some page which will appeal to other than legal brains. Surely a town which boasts that its Ness is England's easternmost point must have tempted some invading fleet to bombard it or land an alien army on its shore! But no; I can find no record of any such occurrence. The only event bearing any suggestion of an attack from seaward is the fitting-out of a ship by Yarmouth burgesses who were bent on making reprisals on the Lowestoft men for some damage done in the course of their miserable quarrels about fish. Still, as in the case of most coast towns, it is the sea that does most towards making Lowestoft history, and too often makes it a sad one. Listen to what it did on the 19th December, 1770.

About one o'clock in the morning a dreadful storm arose, and "continued with increasing violence till five, when the wind suddenly changed from the south-west to the north-west, and for two hours raged with a fury hardly ever equalled. Anchors and cables proved too feeble a security for the ships, which instantly parting from them, and running on board each other, produced a confusion neither to be described nor conceived; not a few immediately foundering. . . . At daylight a scene of most tragic distress was exhibited. Those who first beheld it assert that no less than eighteen ships were on the sand before this place at one and the same time; and many others were seen to sink. Of those on the sand, one half were entirely demolished with their crews before nine o'clock; the rest were preserved a few hours longer; but this dreadful pause served only to aggravate the destruction of the unhappy men who belonged to them, who betook themselves to the masts and rigging. These continually breaking, eight or ten were not unfrequently seen to perish at a time, without the

possibility of being assisted. . . . It is impossible to collect with certainty how many lives, or how many ships, were lost in this terrible hurricane. Twenty-five at least, perhaps thirty ships, and two hundred men, do not seem to be an exaggerated account. This, indeed, is too small a calculation if credit is to be given to one of the seamen, who declares he saw six vessels sink not far without the Stanford, among which was a large ship bound for Lisbon, with sixty or seventy passengers on board."

It was such disasters as these—too frequent in the days when all the coasting trade of the kingdom was carried on by sailing craft—that provided work for the East Anglian beachmen and led to the forming of the beach companies, of which there are still a few surviving on the Norfolk and Suffolk coasts. The chief object of these companies was salvage; for this they built the long slender gigs and graceful yawls which now rest during the greater part of the year on the beach shingle; but they were instrumental in saving many lives, for their salvage craft were the lifeboats of the coast before the days of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Equal shares all round of the profits of a salvage trip were taken by the men who manned or helped to get afloat the gigs or yawls; even the laying of a hand on the boat's rudder as she left the beach entitled a man to a share. Rival companies competed keenly when a ship struck on a shoal or, disabled, drifted towards the shore. Each gang of beachmen strove its hardest to get its boat first afloat, and the race for the endangered vessel was a sight to see. But the day has gone when the beachman's was a profitable calling; now it is the steam tugs that go bustling out of port when a ship is in distress. The beachman of to-day is glad to earn a few shillings by 'longshore fishing or a few pounds by mackerel-catching "round at the Westward," and the older men, who can remember the good old times when a day's work sometimes brought in enough money to maintain a family throughout a winter, sit in the old companies' wooden sheds and

deplore the changes they have seen. They do this at Lowestoft; and if you go down on to the north beach you may join them in the headquarters of the Old Company of Lowestoft Beachmen, which, adorned with the figureheads and name-boards of ships lost off the coast, still stands between the coastguard station and the sea.

That part of Lowestoft—the fishermen's quarter—which lies at the foot of the hanging gardens sloping down from the High Street, is far more interesting than the south beach with its throng of pleasure-seekers or the Esplanade with its fine

Lowestoft Harbour.

hotels and ugly houses, for the pebble-built cottages, battered net-chambers, and red-roofed curing-sheds tell the story of a Lowestoft that knew nothing of boarding-houses and never dreamt of catering for Clapham and Brixton. The men who lived here when many of these quaint old structures were built found them useful for other purposes than those for which they were presumably erected. Kegs of brandy and packages of foreign laces and silks not infrequently found temporary lodgings under heaps of brown nets, and their conveyance thither meant midnight expeditions to lonesome clefts in

the cliffs. At times a daring spirit was displayed and not a little skilful subterfuge employed when a valuable cargo was to be landed unknown to the excisemen. One instance of this is still the theme of a favourite tale among the older men of the beach. A long-expected French lugger was seen making for the roadstead, and the Lowestoft freetraders were on the alert, anxiously seeking an opportunity for communicating with her crew. While they waited for a lapse in vigilance on the part of the excisemen, a boat was lowered from the lugger and rowed towards the shore. A curious crowd of beachmen and excisemen assembled to meet her, and as she came in on the crest of a roller it was observed that she contained a coffin. The French boatmen had a mournful tale to tell. On board the lugger had been an Englishman suffering from an illness which soon proved fatal. In his last moments of consciousness he had begged the captain not to bury him at sea; but to keep his body until a resting-place could be found for it under the green turf of a churchyard in his native land. Sympathy with his sad fate, and the knowledge that the lugger was not far from the English coast, had induced the captain to consent; and now he had sent the body ashore for burial. In spite of his broken English the Frenchmen's spokesman told his tale well. Both excisemen and beachmen—especially the latter—loudly expressed their admiration of the captain's conduct. A parson was summoned, and in a little while a mournful procession made its way from the beach to the churchyard; even the chief officer of the excisemen was present and is said to have shed tears. That night the local "resurrectionists" were busy; and at dawn the churchyard contained a desecrated grave. A little way inland, however, in the midst of the marshes, a smugglers' store received the addition of a coffin filled with silks and lace!

It is in the fishermen's quarter that you may hear old sea songs sung which are unknown outside the beachmen's homes and the cabins of the North Sea smacks and drifters; and if you are on sufficiently intimate terms with the singers

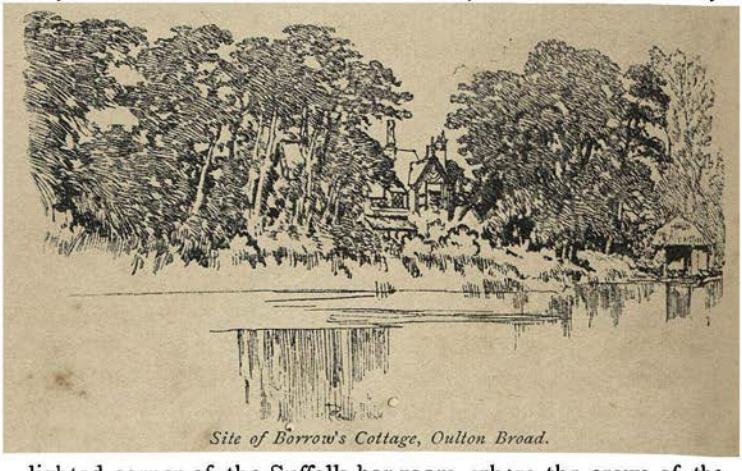
they may shyly reveal to you a lingering belief in some strange old superstitions. Even within the last ten years I have heard of boatowners consulting "wise women" as to what would be the result of their season's fishing; and you may still find fishermen who will not go to sea unless they carry with them a charm against drowning. I cannot vouch for it, but I suspect it was from this quaint old colony below the cliffs that the men and women came who, in 1664, went up to the assizes at Bury St. Edmunds to give evidence against Rose Cullender and Amy Duny, two Lowestoft witches, who then and there were condemned to death for bewitching certain men, women.

Lowestoft from Lake Lothing.

and children of the town. The account of the trial contains few features that are not common in the records of similar cases of the period, except that the celebrated Doctor—afterwards Sir Thomas—Browne, author of *Religio Medici*, was one of the witnesses. He is described in the report of the proceedings as a "person of great knowledge," who gave it as his opinion that in such cases as that before the court "the devil did work upon the bodies of men and women . . . co-operating with the malice of these which we term witches, at whose instance he doth these villanies."

Inseparably associated with Lowestoft in my mind are the names of two literary Bohemians of the old school. One, whose

home for several years we have already seen at Woodbridge, loved to join the fishermen in the bar-room of the Suffolk Inn —the old Suffolk Inn, now vanished—and talk of the sea and the ways of the men of the sea; the other, although seldom seen in the town, lived near it, except when he was crouching by some gipsy's camp-fire or quaffing ale in the rural hostelries of "Wild Wales." Many of Edward FitzGerald's published letters from Lowestoft were inspired by his love of the sea and seamen. During his frequent visits to the town he generally stayed at a house in the London Road; but it was in a dimly

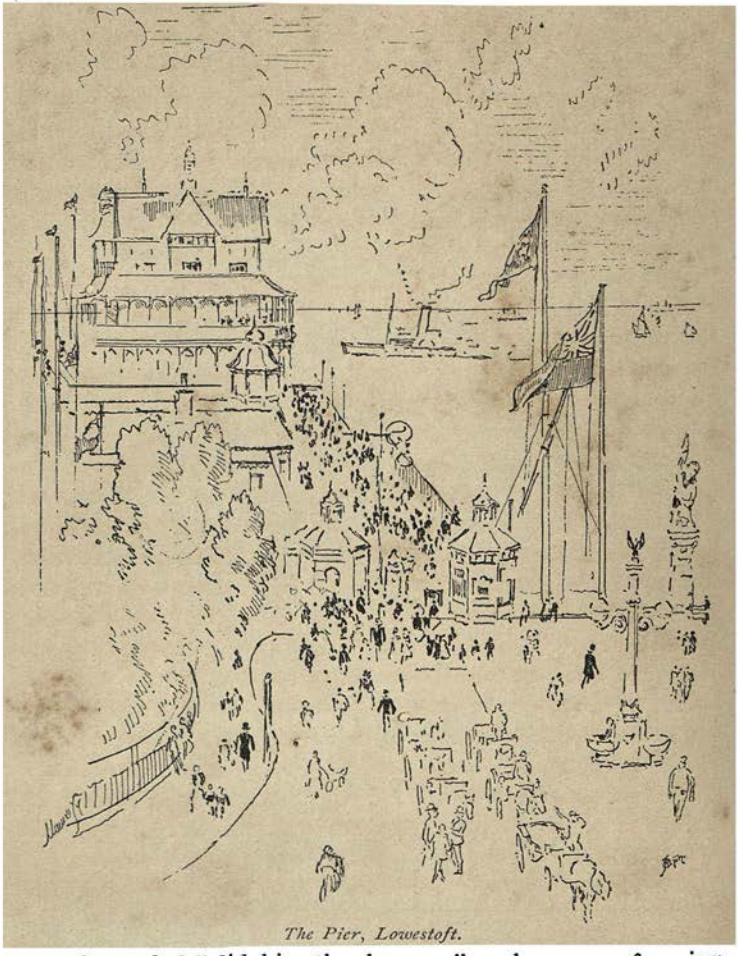


Site of Borrow's Cottage, Oulton Broad.

lighted corner of the Suffolk bar-room, where the crews of the fishing boats assembled, or among the net chambers of the fishermen, that he was oftenest to be found. There he would talk for hours with his fisherman friend "Posh" Fletcher, who was his active partner in a herring-fishing venture, and who still lives to tell of the nights and days he spent on board FitzGerald's yacht *Scandal*, or their fishing boat, the *Meum and Tuum*. FitzGerald's experiences as a boatowner were a source of much entertainment to the local men, who could not understand what induced him to participate in a business in

which it was impossible for him to compete successfully with practised owners and buyers. Yet for a time his whole heart was in it, and no details were too trivial for his attention. "Posh has, I believe," he writes, "gone off to Southwold in hope to bring his lugger home. I advised him last night to ascertain first by letter whether she were ready for his hands; but you know he will go his own way, and that generally is as good as anybody's. . . . I think he has mistaken in not sending the *Meum and Tuum* to the West this spring, not because the weather seems to promise in all ways so much better than last (for that no one could anticipate), but on account of the high price of fish of any sort, which has been an evident fact for the last six months." I wonder what Carlyle and Tennyson thought (if they knew) of their friend, 'Old Fitz," as a fish-merchant!

George Borrow was not so well known in the town. In his isolated home on the banks of Oulton Broad he lived, during his latter years, the life of a recluse; or if he ventured abroad it was to stalk solitarily—a tall, striking figure, wrapped in a Spanish cloak—along the quiet Oulton lanes. There his piercing glance sometimes made the lonely farm-hand quail and think of the baneful effects of the "evil eye," while children, awed by the presence of the mysterious squire whose chief friends were the roving gipsies, ceased their playing until he had gone by. It is scarcely twenty years since Borrow died; yet there are few dwellers in Lowestoft or Oulton who remember that he lived among them. His old home is pulled down; and for the majority of the pleasure-seekers who row or sail on Oulton Broad the little summer house on its bank has no associations. Yet it was in this quiet retreat, within hearing of the rustling of the water-side reeds and sheltered by a copse of storm-rent firs, that the "Walking Lord of Gipsy Lore" wrote *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, and the *Bible in Spain*. Here, too, he entertained his Romany friend Jasper Petulengro, when that



The Pier, Lowestoft.

garrulous *chal* "did him the honour," as he says, of paying him a visit and discoursing with him on the "affairs of Egypt." These "affairs of Egypt" were the affairs of the gipsies. "There is no living for the poor people, brother," said Petulengro to

Borrow; "the *chokengres* (police) pursue us from place to place, and the *gorgios* are becoming either so poor or miserly that they grudge our cattle a bite of grass by the wayside, and ourselves a yard of ground to light a fire upon. Unless times alter, brother, and of that I see no probability unless you are made either *poknees* or *mecralliskoe geiro* (justice of the peace or prime minister), I am afraid the poor persons will have to give up wandering, and then what will become of them?" The "poor persons" still make the same complaint. The era of county and parish councils looks with little favour upon the English Ishmaelites, who have even greater difficulty than in Borrow's day in finding a grazing ground by the wayside or a heath where they may light a camp fire. But they are still with us in East Anglia—the Greys, the Smiths, the Coopers, Borrows Griengres, Petulengros, and Wardo-engres—and not far from the site of their historian's old home, on a tract of waste land near a grove of elms and birches, I have sat by their fires and tried to *rokker Romany* with their wizened old crones. With passages from the *Lavo-Lil* (Borrow's *Gipsies' Word-Book*) I have tested their knowledge of the strange tongue of their forefathers, and I have seen them exchange glances of surprise and suspicion at hearing a *gorgio* discourse of things he should not know. While the smoke rose in a blue cloud against the background of dusky trees, and the nightingales' heart-searching songs were heard from the grove, it was easy to understand why George Borrow moped and felt his soul fettered in murky London, and could find no peace nor joy in life until he took to the Great North Road, slept in a gipsy's tent in a dingle, and heard a black-eyed Romany *chi* sing

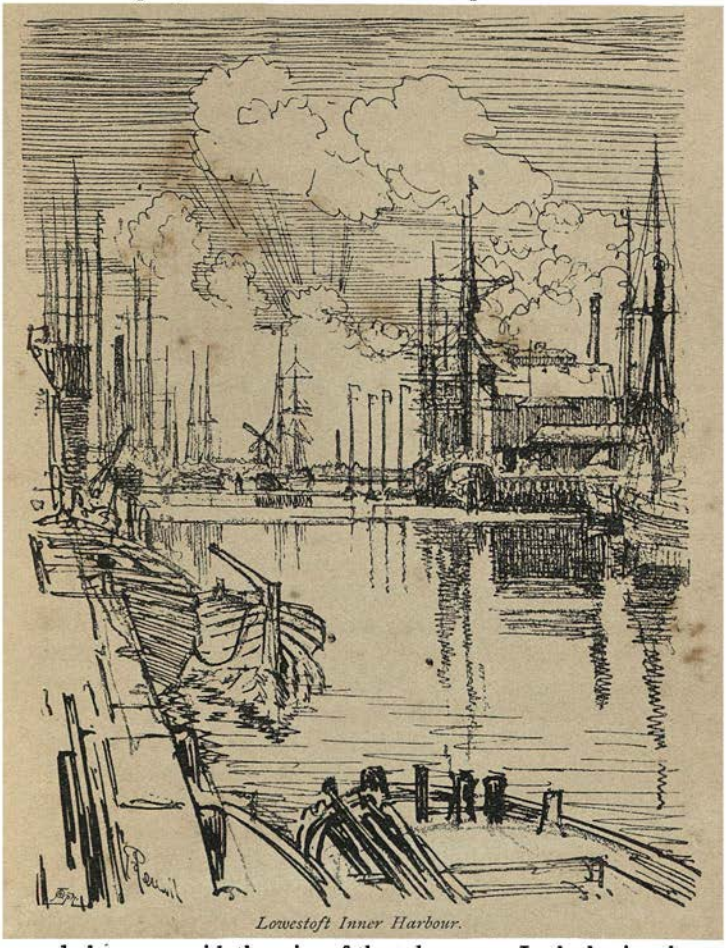
> "The Romany chi
> And the Romany chal
> Shall jaw tasaulor
> To drab the bawlor,
> And dook the gry
> Of the farming rye."

Heathenish gibberish it sounds to modern ears, but smacks of the joy of life under summer sun, on "the field and heath and windy moor!"

But the "Walking Lord of Gipsy Lore" has led me out of Lowestoft into the leafy lanes of Oulton, and I must return to the town for a while. I would like to find some indication that the name of Thomas Nash is not forgotten in his native town; but a place which has little recollection of Borrow and FitzGerald, who were here twenty years ago, can scarcely be expected to cherish the memory of a satirist who was born here at the end of the sixteenth century. Yet he wrote *Lenten Stuffe, or the Praise of the Red Herring, fitte of all clearkes of all noblemen's kitchens to be read, and not unnecessary by all serving men that have short board wages to be remembered*; and what Lowestoft does not know about herrings is not worth knowing. Doubtless the hardy seafarers who throng the quays could have told Nash a good deal about their calling that would have been news to him; but they would have stood agape and aghast at his euphuistic rhapsodies. Listen to him. "To fetch the red herring in Trojan equipage, some of every of the Christ Cross alphabet of outlandish cosmopoli furrow up the rugged brine, and sweep through his tumultuous ooze. For our English Microcosmos or Phœnician Dido's hide of ground, no shire, county, county palatine, or quarter of it, but rigs out some oaken squadron or other to waft him along Cleopatraean Olympickly, and not the least nook or crevice of them but is parturient of the like super-officiousness, arming forth, though it be but a catch or pink, no capabler than a rundlet or washing bowl to imp the wings of his convoy. Holy St. Taurbard, in what droves the gouty Londoners hurry down, and dye the watchet air of an iron russet hue with the dust that they raise in hot spurred rowelling it on to perform compliments unto him." *Lenten Stuffe*—queer stuff!

Outside the metropolis there are few scenes of more bustling activity than the Lowestoft fishmarkets on a busy day, when

scores of smacks from the North Sea trawling grounds have arrived in port, and the wharves are heaped with fish-boxes



Lowestoft Inner Harbour.

and clamorous with the cries of the salesmen. In the basins the smacks lie so close together that one may walk from pier to pier

upon them. Here, a little crowd of idlers is gathered around a monster halibut or sturgeon, or, maybe, a vicious-looking thresher shark, which while ravaging the mackerel shoals found its way into a drifter's nets; there, tackling on to a rope, a row of smacksmen are hauling ashore a broken trawl beam. Mingled with the sturdy, ruddy-cheeked East Coast men are a few Frenchmen or Belgians, whose clumsy boats, from Boulogne, Trouville, Calais, and Ostende, are moored alongside the smarter and more graceful Lowestoft trawlers; occasionally a clatter of sabots betokens the presence of heavy-gaited Dutchmen. Or if it be late autumn, when herring and mackerel are plentiful off the coast, a large fleet of fast sailing luggers from Kirkcaldy, Banff, and Inverness will be intermingled with the dandy-rigged Lowestoft boats which make for port every morning; and everywhere in the streets you will rub shoulders with sturdy Scotchmen. Then is the herring market heaped from end to end with glistening herring and rainbow-hued mackerel, and you need be wary in walking among them to escape the clattering barrows. But to fully appreciate the extent and importance of the Lowestoft fishing industry you must be in touch with it from January to December, and not for one year only but many years; and even then you will have something to learn. For one year's fishermen's harvest differs from another as do the farmers' harvests, and it is always the weather that rules the harvesting.

I stay longer in Lowestoft than will most people who follow the route I have travelled, and it is early summer when I resume my ramblings. I then set out for Yarmouth; but on my way thither turn aside and visit Fritton, where is one of the loveliest lakes in Broadland. It is not a broad, as the term is understood in Norfolk, where it means the "broadening" of a river; but it possesses all the beauty that Wroxham and Barton boast and many charms of its own. Engirdled by woods, scarcely a murmur of human life disturbs its brooding peace; you may

float on its waters all day and hear only the whispering of the reeds, the crowing of the pheasants in the woods, and the chuckling of the reed birds. In the Old Hall garden which slopes down to the lake you inhale the fragrance of old-fashioned flowers. Winding paths through the woodlands lead you into bosky dells bright with pink-blossomed willow-herbs, and sunlit glades where the scattered bushes are garlanded with wild roses. Here, if anywhere, a man cannot say that the world is too much with him. Bright green of larch and dusky foliage of fir, scent of eglantine and blossom of wild strawberry, mavis in the brake and wood-dove on the tree-top—these are the delights of Fritton—these and the gleaming of sunlit waters between the boles of rugged oaks and smooth green beeches, and the flickering fretwork of light and shade beneath the trees.

It is not enough to spend only the sunlit hours of a summer day on Fritton Lake; you must linger on its waters or its shores until the daylight fades and the moon is mirrored where the sunbeams lately played. Draw your boat up close beneath the boughs of some waterside tree, or seat yourself on some rugged limb which commands a view of the lake, and then be content just to look at and listen to what you see and hear around you. Mark the moonglade on the water, stretching like a silvern pathway to the distant woods; the swans stealing silently out of the shadow into the silver light. Listen to the rustling of the night-prowling woodland creatures and the complaining of startled woodland birds. There is no need to listen for the songs of the nightingales; you cannot help hearing them. All the other night sounds of wood and water are simply interludes of their outbursts of enchanting melody. All day long they have been singing, but their songs were mingled in the general chorus of feathered minstrels; now the thrushes, blackbirds, and linnets are silent, and the nightingales hold the night spellbound while they answer each other from shore to shore. "There can be no very black melancholy

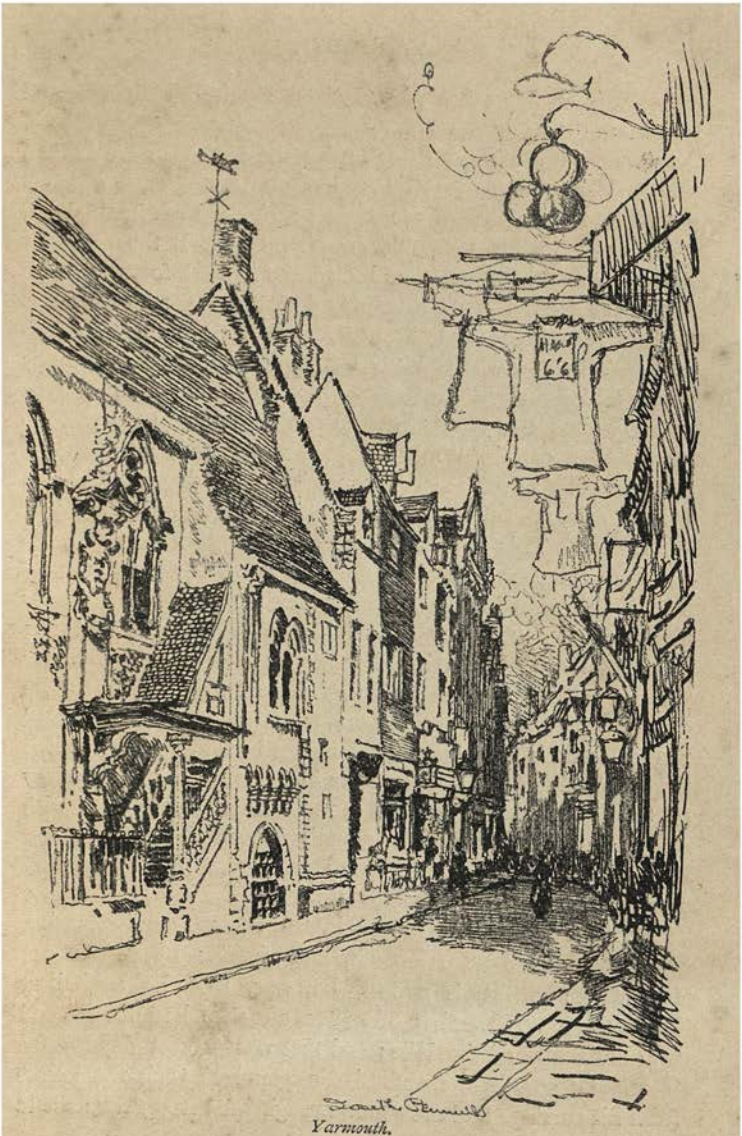
in him who lives in the midst of Nature, and has his senses still," wrote Thoreau while musing by the side of Walden; and I am disposed to defy any man who spends a day and night, or a succession of days and nights, by the side of Fritton Lake to experience a very black melancholy. Melancholy he may feel; but it will be that pleasing melancholy which is half the delight derived from looking upon loveliness and listening to the singing of birds and the whispering of the wind among the trees. Such melancholy may even move to tears; but the "divine despair" which sets the eyes brimming is no heart-searching sorrow to leave its mark on a man and embitter the cup of life from which he drinks. Rather, it sends him back to the busy ways of man conscious of having learnt a lesson which will lighten his load of care and help him to estimate most things at their proper value. Amid the distraction of business and wearying worries he will not fail to remember that there are still "haunts of ancient peace," even within the narrow limits of his native land, where, if he chooses to live like Thoreau and let the world go its own way, he may find quietude and rest. And even if this knowledge does not tempt him to follow the example of the Walden philosopher, he may, by pondering over it in the night watches and Sabbath evenings of his weeks and days, experience a good deal of contemplative and retrospective enjoyment, which will, in a measure, compensate for inability to participate in the real thing.

I fancy that Thoreau, had he been an East Anglian, would have chosen a site on the shores of Fritton Lake for the building of his log hut. His *Week on the Concord* would then have been a *Week on the Waveney*; he would have found defiance in the crow of a cock pheasant or the call of a heron instead of in the laugh of the loon. In the Fritton woods he would have enjoyed that solitude which he considered essential to the making of a man; here, too, he would have watched the little wild creatures—the squirrels, mice, and rabbits—

come quite close to the door of his hut, and listened to the loud honking of the wild geese and the mournful hootings and mewings of the woodland owls. His *Fritton* would have been full of notes on the natural history of his woodland retreat; he would have told us how it came about that the herons ceased to nest in the Fritton trees, and when the bustard was last seen on the neighbouring heathlands. He would have known whenever a golden oriel was haunting the woods, or a flock of crossbills had settled there; he would have had strange stories to tell about the huge pike and ancient bream which lurked in the deep dark waters of the lake. Careless of tearing his clothes or lacerating his face and hands, he would have plunged through the thorniest of thickets if by so doing he might learn something of the craft of a Fritton poacher; regardless of chills, he would have crouched for hours behind the screens of a wild fowl decoy to watch the luring of the duck and teal. The tapping of the Fritton woodpeckers, the chuckling of the Fritton reed birds, and the singing of the Fritton nightingales would have inspired all that was best in him and confirmed him in the opinion that "Nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her." "She flourishes most alone, far from the towns where they reside," he tells us. She flourishes at Fritton; and even if we cannot fully appreciate her, a Thoreau would have made us understand something of the charm of her wild beauty and the fascination of her many moods. He would have given us the fruits of his musings as he sat by the door of his hut, gazing upon the red sunsets behind the dusky firs, and the mystic beauty of the moonlit lake. I fancy I see him, clad in garments of the russet hue of the autumn woods, "a-gipsying among the pines"; acquainted with every bird-cry from the thickets and wild flower of the woods and waterside; day after day treading the same winding footpaths strewn with fallen beechmast and fir cones; brushing his way through shady copses, ankle deep in a rustling carpet of withered leaves. Fritton Lake is his

forest mirror; in it he sees reflected all the pageantry of beauty the fringing woodlands assume and his vivid pen describes. The rising of the moon above the sombre woods and its mystic light in their shadowy aisles sets him pondering over the curious turning of the tide of thought which is brought about by lunar influence; the setting sun paints for him the glory of vanished nations on the western sky. Nothing is too mean or too grand for his range of thought; the lakeside myosotis and humble bank vole appeal to him as well as the flush of dawn and the splendour of the dying day.

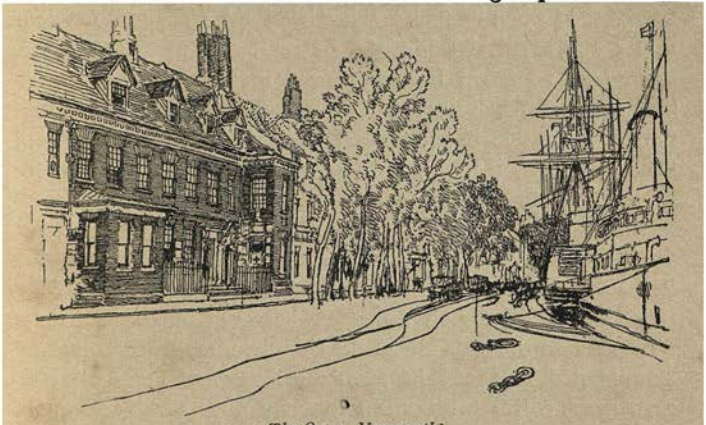
Only in summer and autumn are the waters of Fritton Lake accessible to the world in general; in winter seldom does a boat glide over its steely surface or a footfall break the silence of its woods. For it is in winter the decoyman crouches behind his reed screens and lures the wild fowl into his tunnel-like decoys; and to make the capture of the fowl possible they must not be alarmed by any disturbing sound. But decoying is little practised nowadays, and, like the broadsman, the decoyman will soon find his occupation gone. The wholesale slaughter of wild fowl—thousands of duck, teal, and widgeon were sometimes taken weekly in the old decoys—is now condemned as unsportsmanlike, and it is only where, as at Fritton, decoys are worked for the amusement of their owners rather than for profit that this old-time method of wild-fowl-capture is still pursued. Still, if it is a doubtful "sport" there is excitement enough attached to the working of a decoy. Cramped limbs and frost-nipped fingers are forgotten when the decoyman's dog begins its antics at the mouth of the pipe and the inquisitive fowl come swimming towards the shore. A good decoyman will allow himself to be suffocated by the smoke of the smouldering peat he carries rather than cough and alarm the fowl, and he will risk the salvation of his soul in muttering imprecations on the head of the gunner who shoots within a mile of the lake or the trespasser who forces a way noisily through the undergrowth of the woods.



Yarmouth.

Scarcely an hour has passed since I left the lakeside, and now I am riding up the Southtown road and entering Yarmouth. As I cross the Haven Bridge, with the harbour on one hand and the wide expanse of Breydon on the other, I catch a glimpse of the spire of the largest parish church in England, while right in front of me, on Hall Quay, is the Old Star Hotel. For some time I am indisposed to look for more than I can see from the neighbourhood of the Haven Bridge—to venture into the quaint narrow "rows" of the "Norfolk Gridiron." The Star Hotel itself has enough interest to occupy one for half a day. Not always was this fine old house an inn. In the latter years of the sixteenth century there came to Yarmouth a certain William Crowe, a younger son of an old Suffolk family whose moated manor hall, now degenerated into a farmhouse, is still to be seen near the small market town of Debenham. This William Crowe joined the Company of Spanish Merchants, and becoming a prosperous man of business was made bailiff of Yarmouth town. He built for himself the house now known as the Star Hotel, and was lavish of his wealth in its adornment. If you enter the bar you see that it was once the hall of the old bailiff's house. Its ceiling was exceedingly elaborate; even now its beautiful workmanship is something to admire and wonder at. But it is the so-called Nelson Room on the first floor which is the glory of this old house. This is a room lined throughout with carved panelling, and with a grandly decorated ceiling. Over the fireplace is a panel bearing the arms of the Spanish Merchants; curious cupboards are concealed in the panelling. Nelson is said to have lodged in this room on one occasion when he landed at Yarmouth, but whether he did or not I cannot say. It is a fact, however, that he landed at Yarmouth on November 6th, 1800, after he had fought and won the Battle of the Nile; and that was a great day for the town. Of course, the enthusiastic populace took the horses from his carriage and drew him through the thronged streets to

the old Wrestlers' Hotel, where he received the freedom of the borough. "Your *right* hand, my lord," said the town clerk, when he went to administer the oath and Nelson laid his left hand on the book. "That is at Teneriffe," was the quiet reply; but the civic fathers heard it and again shouted themselves hoarse in expressing their sympathy and admiration. Later in the day the hero of the Nile, accompanied by Sir William and Lady Hamilton and a mighty concourse of people, went to St. Nicholas Church, there to return thanks to God for the successes of the British fleet. Even the largest parish church

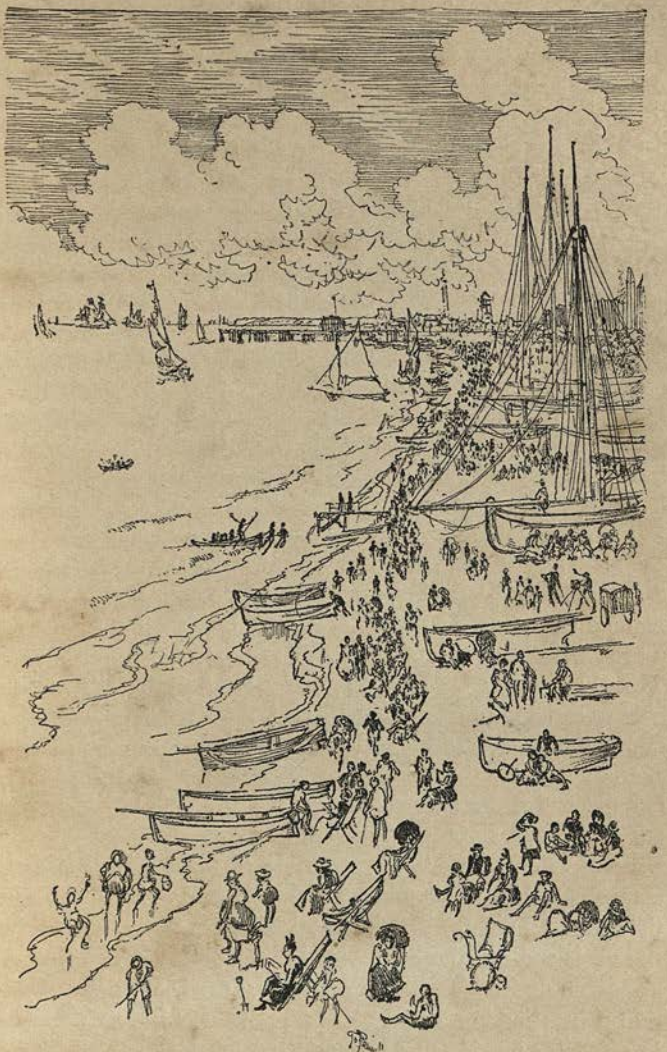


The Quay, Yarmouth

in England could scarcely contain that mighty congregation. After that eventful day there was no town in England where the career of the famous Norfolk admiral was watched with greater or more affectionate interest than at Yarmouth, and it is no wonder that after the victory at Trafalgar had cost him his life a lofty monument to his memory arose on the South Denes.

Along one side of the South Quay are several quaint old houses, one of which, a flint-faced building with dormer windows and a small room above the porch, must date from

before the days when Miles Corbet the regicide was Yarmouth's recorder and representative in Parliament. Much of Yarmouth's architecture strikes one as un-English. The Continental influence that was felt here when the port was one of the most important in the kingdom has left its mark upon the place. The narrow rows remind one of Amsterdam; there is something Dutch, too, about the old Fishermen's Hospital; and the tree-shaded quay might have been constructed from models of those of Rotterdam or Seville. The Dutch aspect of the town impressed David Copperfield when he first saw it "lying like a straight, low line under the sky." "I hinted," he says, "to Peggotty that a mound or so might have improved it, and also that if the land had been a little more separated from the sea, and the town and the tide had not been quite so much mixed up, like toast-and-water, it would have been much nicer." But when he got into the streets and "smelt the fish, and pitch, and oakum, and tallow, and saw the sailors walking about, and the carts jingling up and down over the stones," he felt that he "had done so busy a place an injustice." Still, he was quite right about the Dutch aspect, which even now is not only noticeable in the town but in the neighbourhood. Beyond the stone-walled banks of Breydon are miles and miles of level marshland, where the horizon in some directions is unbroken except by the gaunt outlines of the drainage windmills. Like Holland, Yarmouth has been won from the waves. Centuries ago the site on which it stands was little better than a mudbank at the mouth of a great estuary which stretched away inland as far as Beccles and Bungay in one direction and Norwich in another. Where countless herds of cattle now graze on lush pastures, Roman galleys sailed to conquer dwellers in the Icenic settlement the victors called *Venta Icenorum*, and Sweyn of Denmark, with his viking fleet, sped to plunder and burn the Norwich of the East Anglian kings. The early inhabitants of Yarmouth held their homes by a

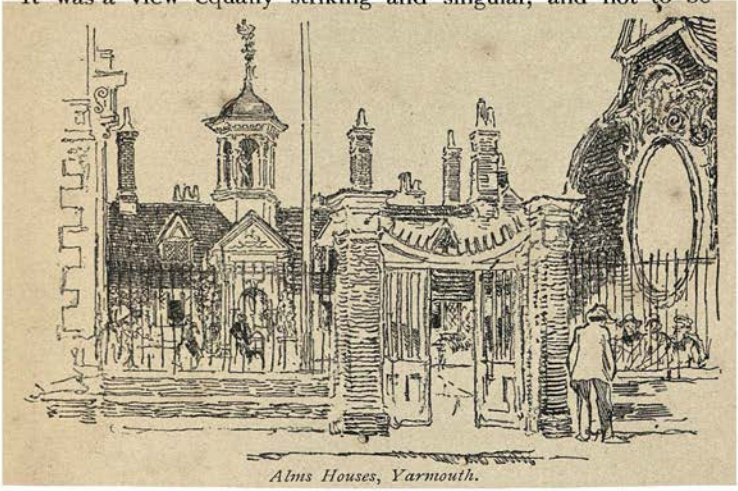


Yarmouth Beach.

frail tenure; they never knew how soon the sea might claim what seemed to be its own. Even now the possibility of a disastrous sea flood cannot be wholly ignored. In 1897, when the waves broke through the sandhill bastions of Palling and Horsey, there were not wanting alarmists who feared for the safety of the old town. When flat-bottomed boats from Scheveningen and Maassluis are moored by the quayside their crews feel quite at home. They see much that reminds them of their hard-won homeland. When the harbour mouth was altered "a certain Dutchman, Joost Jansen, a man of very rare knowledge and experience in works of this nature," was engaged to superintend the work. When hundreds of Dutch families were driven from the Netherlands by Alva's persecution, many of them settled here, and some of the houses built by them and their descendants are still standing.

During the eighteenth century the Dutch and Yarmouth fishermen were on very friendly terms. At that time what was called "Dutch Sunday" was observed in the town on the Sunday before September 21st, the day on which the herring fishing commenced with the ceremony of "wetting the nets," a proceeding the nature of which can be easily understood. The Dutchmen usually timed their arrival so that they were able to assist in the "wetting." Nall, the Yarmouth historian, quotes the words of an eye-witness to their arrival. "With the afternoon's tide the Dutchmen began to enter the haven's mouth; and it was pleasing to see them proceed, one after the other, up the river to the town . . . . Of these vessels about fifty came up this year. All of them arrived in the course of Friday evening; and at night I took a walk to view them by moonlight. The low line of masts, exactly uniform; the yards and furled sails disposed in a regular row, the crews sitting on deck with their pipes, calmly enjoying their repose, and conversing in a strange tongue, impressed the imagination in a forcible but pleasing manner: the quiet and order which reigned among so large a number was much to be admired.

On Saturday the streets were sprinkled with parties of Dutchmen, easily distinguished by their round caps, short jackets, and most capacious breeches . . . . On the ensuing Sunday, called 'Dutch Sunday,' all the country round, as far as Norwich, flocked to see the show. The Dutch did honour to their visitors by decorating their schuyts with flags in the gayest manner they were able. The whole length of the quay was crowded by people of all ranks, in their best apparel. . . . It was a view equally striking and singular, and not to be



Alms Houses, Yarmouth.

matched in any part of the kingdom." "Dutch Sunday" is now an obsolete festival, and the Dutchmen no longer "wet their nets" at Yarmouth; but they still come here and to Lowestoft in considerable numbers at Christmas for pickled herring, and then look very like their forerunners of a century and a half ago. They are still distinguished by their "round caps, short jackets, and most capacious breeches."

Yarmouth owes its parish church to Herbert de Lozinga, the first Norman bishop of Norwich, a man concerning whom

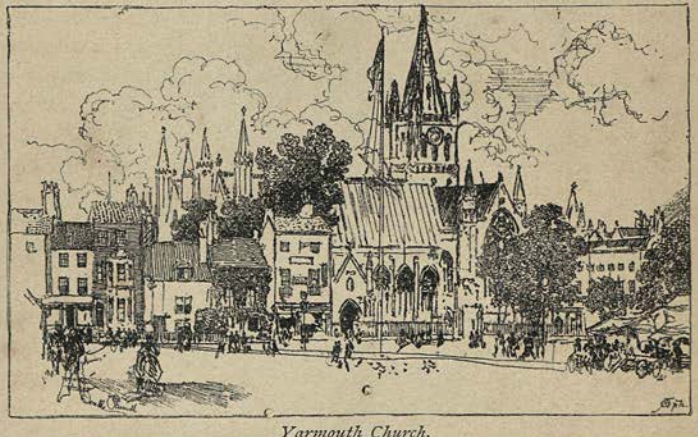
the old chroniclers tell us very little. He has been claimed by some as an East Anglian; but it seems more probable that he was a native of Normandy. He was educated at the monastery of Fécamp, and came over to England at the invitation of William Rufus, who had several bishoprics and abbacies to distribute among his favourites. Fortunately for East Anglia, Lozinga was an ambitious man and not too scrupulous how he gained his ends. Not content with the dignity of Abbot of Ramsey, he aspired to the bishopric of Thetford; and finding Ralph Flambard disposed to sell the appointment to the see, the purchase money was soon forthcoming. As Bale says, "First he was here in England, by fryndeshyp made Abbot of Ramseye, and afterwards made byshop of Thetforde; for the which he is named in the chronicles of his day the 'kyndeling match of simony,' and that noateth him no small doar in that feate." As a matter of fact, he bought the bishopric for £1900 and the abbacy of Winchester for £1000. Simony, however, was a serious ecclesiastical offence, and the new bishop had not long settled in his palace before his conscience pricked him. He determined to make a pilgrimage to Rome and crave absolution from the head of his church. On arriving at Rome he resigned his bishopric; but was at once reinstated, and he then obtained permission to remove his see from Thetford to Norwich. As a penance for his simony, he was ordered to build certain churches and monasteries in his diocese; and so it came about that Norwich was beautified by its grand cathedral, Lynn by its fine priory church of St. Margaret, and Yarmouth was given a building which has since become the largest parish church in England. William of Malmesbury called Lozinga *Vir Pecuniosus*; Defoe thought he might have called him *Vir Pecuniosissimus*, "considering the times he lived in, and the works of charity and munificence which he has left as witness of his immense riches." He certainly, in spite of his name, which means "flatterer," was a warm-tempered man, for when

The Wind Mill.

the only deer in his park at Homersfield was strangled and stolen he thus cursed the offenders: "May the flesh of all those who devoured my stag rot as the flesh of Herod rotted!

May they have their portion with Judas the traitor, with Ananias and Sapphira, with Dathan and Abiram! Let them have the anathema maranatha, unless they come to a better mind and make me some reparation! Amen."

Of Lozinga's church of St. Nicholas all that now remains is a part of the tower; but there is plenty of his work in Norwich Cathedral. So, with the prospect of seeing the great Norman masterwork to-morrow, I am not greatly disappointed when I find the interior of Yarmouth church rather uninteresting. It contains few tombs and monuments; but this is not surprising,



Yarmouth Church.

seeing that the seventeenth century churchwardens knew no better than to demolish a spendid altar-tomb so that they might build a doorway. About a century earlier the corporation had ordered all the sepulchral brasses to be sent to London and cast into "weights for the use of the town!" There are some curious old books kept in the church; but Lozinga's works "On the Length of the Ages" and "On the End of the World," and his "Book of Monastic Constitutions" are not among them: they are lost irretrievably.

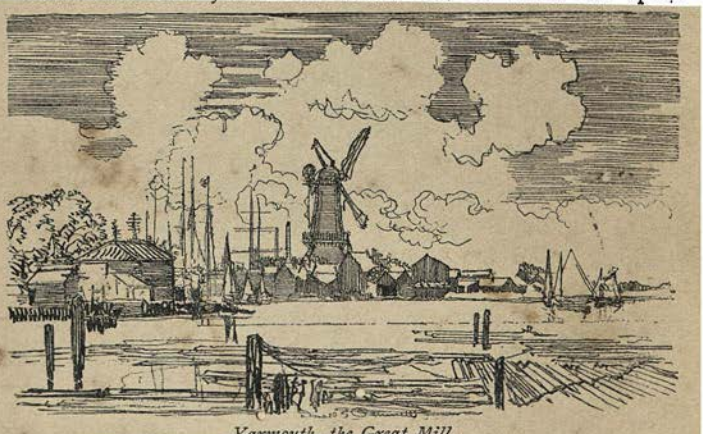
It is difficult to get a good view of St. Nicholas Church

owing to the old houses which abut closely on its main entrance; and after attempting it from various points I return to the market place. Looking back at the tapering spire, I am reminded of a boyish prank of young Astley Cooper, an account of which I have read somewhere. The father of the lad who was to become a distinguished physician was an incumbent of St. Nicholas, and his son seems to have given him a good deal of trouble. One day, when the wind was in the north-east, he got possession of two of his mother's pillows and carried them up the church spire. There he ripped them open and dispersed their contents in the air. The descent of the feathers all over the market place caused great astonishment, and gave rise to curious conjectures, one of which was that a great storm in the north had blown immense quantities of wild-fowl feathers from the island of St. Paul! On another occasion the ingenious youngster concealed himself close to the altar and during a wedding ceremony repeated after his father the words of the marriage service. That was the only time the Rev. Mr. Cooper observed an echo in the church.

The quaint old fishermen's almshouses in the market place, and the Tolhouse, which is probably the oldest municipal building in England, are interesting relics of a Yarmouth which did not owe its prosperity to the summer tripper. In some of the narrow "rows," too, you may see styles of architecture such as are sought in vain in Regent Road and on the Marine Drive. Of monastic remains the town possesses few, and these are of little interest and scanty proportions. Here and there are traces of the fortifications which Henry III. granted the inhabitants permission to erect and maintain "so long as they behaved themselves"—one of the old towers stands near the north-east corner of the churchyard, others are in Blackfriars Street and by the waterside. So the stranger within Yarmouth's gates is not entirely dependent on beach concerts, nigger minstrels, and revolving towers for

entertainment, and may, if he choose, spend a day in the town without having the presence of these inevitable features of a popular pleasure-resort thrust upon him. Even if he has seen enough of the church and quay and quaint old houses, there is always Breydon to turn to. Out in a boat on that wide waste of waters, where the wild fowl flock to the ooze flats and the smelt-catchers' houseboats are moored in the scanty shelter of the "walls," not the faintest murmur of Yarmouth's boisterous merry-making will reach him.

It is towards Breydon I am drawn after an afternoon spent



Yarmouth, the Great Mill.

in distinguishing the old Yarmouth from the new. I know that down by the waterside, a little way above the Haven Bridge, I shall find a flight-shooter's gun-punt moored; and I am bent on seeing the sun set beyond the Breydon marshes. The tide has begun to flow, so there is scarcely need to use the oars as I float up the wide channel, marked out by gaunt, weed-green posts; and by the time I have left the boat-builders' yards behind me, the mud banks are awash, and the gulls, which have fed on them during the ebb, are flighting towards the marshes. A faint mist obscures the horizon, so that one might

easily imagine Breydon were a great inland sea; its waters seem limitless. But as the hour of sunset approaches, the level verge of the marshlands becomes clearly defined, and a few windmills, and here and there a cattle-bield or marsh farmstead, stand out like silhouettes against the background of burning sky. Until the tide has wholly covered a flat on which an abandoned hulk is stranded, a heron keeps a-fishing there for flounders; but suddenly it rises, flies with slow wing-beats westwards, and vanishes in the golden sunset glow. Most of the ark-like houseboats are deserted; it is not the season for smelt-fishing and some months must elapse before the roar of a punt gun will be heard on these quiet waters. But the water-gipsies' floating homes remind me of an autumn night I spent in a naturalist's houseboat on Breydon, and of how a dense fog came down upon land and water, disturbing the gulls and curlews on the flats so that they kept us awake all night by their cries. We were quite content to remain awake. The wild life of Breydon and our experiences on the inland waterways of East Anglia provided us with many subjects of interesting discourse. When morning came the fog had gone, and when we quietly opened our cabin door a heron got up within a few yards of our boat. The keen air of the marshes whetted our appetite for a breakfast cooked over a driftwood fire on the "wall," and the row back to Yarmouth quickened our pulses until we felt that the only life worth living was a life on the tidal waters.

But I have no intention of spending to-night afloat; and as my return voyage must be against the tide I cannot linger late on lonesome Breydon. To avoid the strong inrush of the sea, I keep my punt close to the shore, where the current is less troublesome and I need only beware of shallow water and floating timbers. Sunset is succeeded by an amber afterglow, so it is not quite dark when I bring my boat back to its moorings. After stepping ashore, I ramble a little way along the crest of the "wall" which protects the marshes from the Breydon tides.

Behind me the sky is bright with the glow of the Yarmouth street lamps; before me marsh and flood are only seen by the light of the stars. At night Breydon and its banks assume an aspect almost primeval; only far away, like a fallen star, the light from a lonely marshland cottage gleams across the gloomy flood.

The Quay, Yarmouth.

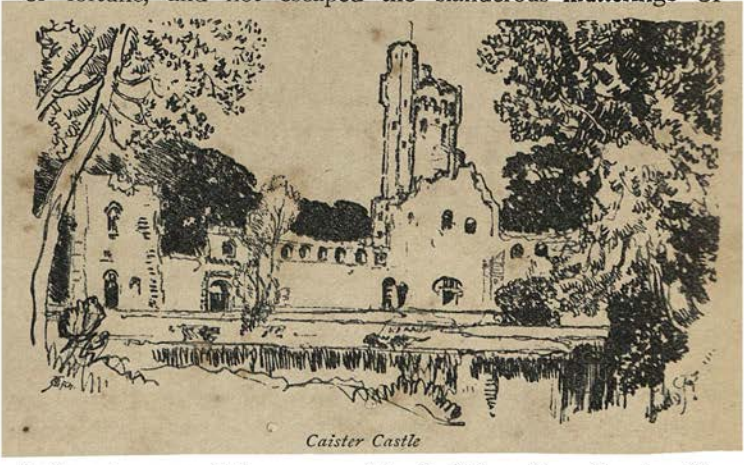
Yarmouth from the Caister Road.

CHAPTER IV

CAISTER CASTLE, NORWICH, AND MOUSEHOLD HEATH

BEFORE Yarmouth is quite awake to the fact that another day has dawned, and while the night mists are still gathered over Breydon, I have left the old town behind me and am watching a pair of lapwings wheeling above the marshes near the Caister road. Away to the right of me is a stretch of waste and common land, sheltered from the sea winds by a ridge of tawny sand-hills; to the left, almost as far as eye can see, are the Bure and Breydon marshes, dotted with rooks and cattle. Caister village soon comes in sight, but I pass through it without stopping, for I am bound for the "City of Churches," and Caister village has no charm for me while Caister Castle stands a mile or so beyond it. Even before I was astir this morning—while I lay and thought of the day's journey before me and planned the route I would take—the tall tower of Caister Castle loomed before me, and I imagined I heard a gruff voice hailing me from the broken battlements. Since then the figure of a bluff old knight has been ever before me; and in fancy I have followed him to Agincourt, where he led

the English archers; to the taking of Caen and the siege of Rouen; and to Patay, where, deserted by his men and unable by threats or pleadings to rally them, he was compelled to flee before a host led by and inspired by the presence of the Maid of Orleans. I have seen him at the head of an English army marching to relieve a beleaguered garrison; again as Governor of the Bastille; and yet again, as the custodian of a captive king. And then, after more than sixty years' military service for his country, during which he has seen many ups and downs of fortune, and not escaped the slanderous mutterings of



Caister Castle

jealous tongues, I have seen him building himself a lordly castle on the border of the Norfolk fens, hoping that, having well earned a period of repose, he may enjoy for a few years a quiet life in his native land.

But he did not even live long enough to complete the building of the castle; and somewhere amid the ruins of a marshland abbey, where lapwings wail over the lonesome flats and the heron fishes undisturbed for days together, Sir John Fastolff's dust lies mingled with that of the monks of St. Benet's-at-Holme. He was a brave old warrior, and I for one

cannot credit the accusations brought against him. Quick-tempered, loud-voiced, and even given to the use of strong language at times he may have been, but a knight of the white feather never! Like an old Norfolk historian, I am indignant that "this truly great and eminent character has, by a quibble on the name, been, by hypercritics, supposed the Sir John Falstaffe which our immortal bard Shakespeare has exhibited in the various characters of an old, humorous, vaporing, cowardly, lewd, lying, and necessitous debauchee, who was constantly lounging about Prince Henry's court."

Sir John Fastolff's castle was a long time building, for it covered some six acres of ground, and the materials of which it was constructed had to be brought to Caister by sea. For this purpose a special license from the Crown had to be obtained, permitting the old knight to keep six vessels in his service, to wit, two "playtes," a "cogship," a "farecoft," and two "balingers." Probably the waters of the wide estuary now shrunk into Breydon extended to Caister then, and the cogships, balingers, and other fearfully and wonderfully named craft could discharge their cargoes right under the castle walls. It was several years before the building was sufficiently habitable for Sir John to give up his London house and settle in Norfolk, and at the end of that time he was on the verge of his grave. His arrival at his new home must have been a great event to the members of the Paston, Heydon, Tuddenham, and other county families, who knew him well and had learnt to detect the true metal of worthiness amid the dross of testy manners. Still, all the evidence goes to show that he was a difficult man to live with; and that in spite of his college-founding and supporting of charitable institutions he was somewhat close-fisted towards his relations, friends, and retainers. "Instances will be found in his letters in abundance," writes the editor of the *Paston Letters*, "showing with what vehemence (testy old soldier that he was!) he perpetually insisted on what was due to himself;—how he desired to know the names of those who

would presume to resist his agent, Sir Thomas Howes,—how they should be requited by 'Blackbeard or Whitebeard, that is to say, by God or the Devil';—how he noted that Sir John Buck had fished his tanks and helped to break his dam,—how he had been informed that at a dinner at Norwich certain gentlemen had used scornful language about him, and desired to know who they were. In this perpetual self-assertion he seems neither to have been over-indulgent towards adversaries nor even sufficiently considerate of friends and dependants." "He bought and sold me as a beast—against all right and law," said his step-son Stephen Scrope, who was his ward, but who himself had afterwards to admit that "For very need I was fain to sell a little daughter I have for much less than I should have done by possibility." Of such dealings in human flesh and blood we get glimpses in the *Paston Letters*; but apparently the victims thought little of being bought and sold, and submitted as a matter of course. At any rate when Scrope, a man of fifty and disfigured by a dreadful disease, made offers for the hand of Elizabeth Paston, a girl of twenty, the latter was said by her mother to be "never so willing as she is to him, if it be that his land is clear." What a mercenary young baggage!

But I am forgetting Sir John Fastolff, for the first time since I set out on my day's journey. He died in 1459, in his eightieth year; and at Magdalen College, Oxford, it was ordained that

> "The monks should sing and the bells should toll,
> All for the weale of Fastolff's soul."

After his death the Pastons occupied Caister Castle; but were not permitted to dwell here in peace. A claimant arose in the person of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, who maintained that old Sir John had given him Caister, and that "he would have it plainly." But it was not until ten years after the old knight's body had been borne to St. Benet's Abbey that the

Duke, with a large body of retainers, laid siege to the castle. Then he found a stubborn resistance offered; and it was not until a year later, when he brought three thousand men up to the castle walls, that the garrison, "from sore lack of victual and gunpowder," were compelled to surrender. Until his death, which occurred five years after the castle fell into his hands, he retained possession; and then Caister was restored to the Pastons by command of the King. Of the Pastons I could say a great deal, for of no other family's public and private affairs during the fifteenth century do we know so much as certain of the Pastons have revealed to us in their famous letters. Margaret Paston, whose girlhood was spent at Mautby, some three miles from Caister "as the crow flies," and who in her husband's absence from home so bravely defended his Gresham house against the rabble followers of Lord Molynes, has won her way to our hearts by her artless confessions and zealous guarding of her husband's interests. Among the many curious letters of the Pastons and their friends which have come down to us, hers are the most delightful. Whether she is advising her husband of the needs of the retainers who are defending his home, or of her own or her children's, she does it in a way that increases our respect for her. "Ryt wurchipful hosbond," she writes, "I recomawnd me to zu, and prey zu to gete me som crosse bowis and wyndacs to bind them with, and quarrels; for zowr hwsis her ben so lȳw that ther may non man shet owt with no long bowe, thow we had never so moche nede." And in the same letter, after retailing the gossip of the neighbourhood:—"I pray zu that ze wyl vowche save to don bye for me j. li. (1 lb.) of almands and j. li. of sugyr, and that ze wille do byen sume frese to maken of zowr child is gwnys; ze xall have best chepe and best choyse of Hayis wyf, as it is told me. And that ze wyld bye a zerd of brode clothe of blac for an hode fore me of xliiij^{d} or iiij^{s} a zerd; for ther is nether gode cloth nor gode fryse in this twn. As for the child is gwnys, and I have them I wel do hem maken." So careful a

wife and mother may be excused if she sometimes has a little fling at her relations. "As for tydyngs, the Quene (Margaret of Anjou) come into this town (Norwich) on Tewysday last past after none, and abode here tyll it was Thursday, iij. after none; and she sent after my cos. Elysabeth Clere by Sharynborn, to come to her; and she durst not dysabey her commandment, and come to her. And when she come in the Queny's presens, the Quene made ryght meche of her, and desyrid here to have an hosbond, the which ye shall know of here after. But as for that he is never nerrer than he was befor."

The most imposing portion of the castle ruins is a lofty circular tower, formerly divided into five storeys, but now hollow, unclimbable, and open to the sky. About its single turret the pigeons are fluttering, now and again resting on a narrow window ledge or cranny in the time-worn brickwork. Apart from this tower there remain only two long walls, pierced with window holes and one or two doorways; and a building known as the Barge House, which forms part of a modern dwelling-house. Above the walls, where the dyer's rocket has found rooting-space in the crevices, the boughs of trees which grow beyond the muddy moat sway to and fro in a breeze from off the sea. Viewed from a slight distance—say from the south-east corner of the courtyard—the castle is striking and picturesque in its decay. A closer inspection reveals much that is desecrating and objectionable. This is the work of innumerable Yarmouth trippers. Scarcely a square inch of accessible brickwork has escaped the scratchings and scrawlings of empty-headed excursionists, who apparently considered that they did not get their money's worth—a charge of twopence is made for admission to the grounds in which the castle stands—unless it purchased the privilege of leaving some obnoxious mark of their undesirable presence. Would that the bluff old knight who reared these walls could have come back for a while and caught the idiotic "'Arries" at their hackings and scribblings! I warrant that, like one of his servants, they

Burgh St. Mary Church.

would have had cause to say he was a man "without pity and mercy.'

Although the castle stands on low ground, its lofty tower is a conspicuous feature of the landscape, and for some time after I take to the road again, I see its bold turreted summit standing out clear above the corn and ridges of the Caister fields. When, at length, it is hidden from view I am in the midst of a cluster of hamlets the terminal syllable of whose names indicates that here was one of the old Scandinavian settlements in East Anglia. Ormesby, Filby, Rollesby, Mautby, Stokesby all adjoin one another and comprise the greater part of a division of land which even now is known as the Flegg (Norse, *flegg*, flat) Hundred. Philological evidence is often, and not without reason, discredited; but here it seems conclusive. If, however, it is not sufficient for some reader, I can show him men in this district who retain the characteristic features—tall sturdy frames, ruddy cheeks, fair hair, and bright blue eyes—of the Norsemen. There are few traces in Norfolk and Suffolk of the permanent settlement of the old viking rovers, so to find them here, and the Norsemen's descendants still occupying some of the holdings which their ancestors seized when they sailed up the great eastern estuary, is the more interesting. Their survival is probably due to the fact that many men live lonely lives in these isolated marshland parishes, and seldom marry outside their own particular communities. Until the middle of the nineteenth century not a few of them gained their livelihood in much the same manner as did their forefathers when their viking ships lay idle on Scandinavian beaches. They fished the rivers as the Norsemen did the fiords, and lured the wild fowl of the fens as the Norsemen did those of their own rock-bound coast. Now they tend the cattle on the misty marshes and take charge of the drainage windmills, for they may shoot wild duck at certain seasons only and snare a pike only when the water bailiff is asleep or far away.

There is no excuse for losing one's way along this old coach

road, for signposts are plentiful, and even direct you to off-lying farms and out-of-the-way marshes. One of these by-roads leads to Mautby, where Margaret Paston was born; but all traces of the home from which John Paston took her to live in, and hold for him, his castellated houses at Gresham, Drayton, and Hellesdon, have vanished. In the long straggling village of Filby half the cottages are roofed with reed-thatch from Filby Broad, whose blue waters, gleaming between the boles of a few scattered alders, firs, and birches, are seen just beyond the last houses in the village. It is a fine sheet of water, and many anglers will tell you that they would rather spend a day on it than a week on any other broad in East Anglia; but it is not so beautiful as Wroxham or Barton, nor so wide as Hickling. Its shores are low and their scenery rather tame; still there are picturesque spots here and there, and I find much enjoyment in leaning on the stone parapet of the bridge and watching the smoke curl upwards from a little cottage half hidden in a waterside grove of trees. A soft breeze sets the green reeds whispering; swallows are busy midge-chasing so close to the surface of the broad that their wings often touch the still waters; somewhere not far from the bridge a reed-warbler is singing incessantly. In the full blaze of the sun the stone parapet is as hot as an oven, and I wonder how the flies, which to my distress are very numerous, dare settle down on it. Very different was the scene here when last I came this way—in "fill-dyke" February, which that year did not belie its name. The reed-cutters' winter harvest was still in progress, and the amber reed culms, gleaming brightly when the pale sunlight filtered through the dun clouds, rustled boisterously and wildly tossed their feathery plumes. Then, the broad was deserted except for a few wild fowl flying low over the wind-ruffled water. Now, there are anglers' punts drawn up close to the green reeds, and though yachts and wherries are never seen at Filby, owing to the channel

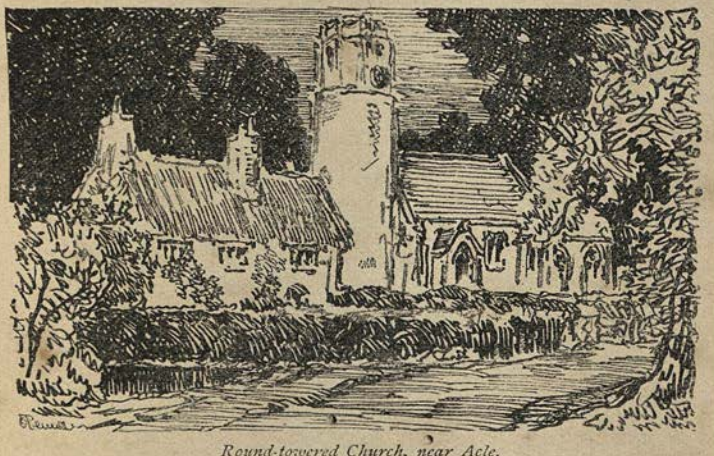
connecting the broad with the Bure being unnavigable, there is quite a little fleet of rowing boats gliding between the low green banks.

The slight rising ground which contains the waters of the broad soon gives way again to marshland, and scarcely have I passed the two ruined churches which stand to the right of the road than I am exposed to a full sun-blaze on Acle Dam. On either hand the marshes stretch away for miles, flat and featureless, except where a pollard willow lifts its bushy head, a windmill stands out boldly on the river-wall, or an alder

Acle.

copse shelters a marshman's lonesome home. Like fen isles in miniature, these copses are dotted over the marshes, and when the floods are "out" become islands indeed, on which the cattle-tenders and their families dwell securely in the midst of a vast inland sea. As I cross the dusty, willow-fringed dam, very vivid are my recollections of that February day I have already referred to; for then I had to fight my way against a raging rain-squall which swept down on the flats, stung the face like hail, and filled the eyes with involuntary tears. Along the borders of the marshes the clouds at midday brooded

black as night, and against them the wind-blown gulls—there were thousands of them on the marshes—showed white as snowflakes on a pall. From beneath my half-closed eyelids I saw the dark-sailed wherries bearing so swiftly down on Acle Bridge that it seemed they must drive it from its foundations. But there were Norfolk river-men on board them—not the amateur yachtsmen who disport themselves on these waterways in summer—and when the wherries were within a hundred yards of the bridge, down came their heavy sails and masts



Round-towered Church, near Acle.

and they sped under the low, narrow arch as easily as swallows. Glad I was when I had crossed the bridge and found shelter and warmth at the Angel Inn; though my pleasure was marred by finding myself close on the heels of a marshland tragedy. Scarcely had I doffed my dripping garments and wiped the raindrops from my face, when two young wherrymen entered the inn. They had come to take charge of a wherry moored near the bridge. During rough weather an old man, who, with his wife, had sailed the wherry for many years, had fallen overboard. He was a good swimmer, but in falling struck his

head against a balk, and stunned by the blow was unable to make a fight for his life. So he was drowned; and the two young fellows were to succeed him and his wife as the wherry's crew. They seemed little affected by the old man's death, and laughed when they heard that his wife after removing her belongings, had, through force of habit, locked the cabin door, so that they could not get in without breaking the lock.

There are white-sailed pleasure wherries among the dingier trading craft at Acle Bridge to-day, and the little village has

Acle Bridge.

received an appreciable addition to its population in the shape of one or two cruising parties who have come ashore to explore the neighbourhood. There is not much for them to see. The ruins of Weybridge Priory—one of the several religious houses founded by the Bigods—are very scanty and not worth going out of one's way to visit. But Acle is a favourite yachting centre, for St. Benet's Abbey is only a few miles up the river, and beyond the abbey are the largest and loveliest of the Norfolk broads. Recollecting delightful days spent on these beautiful lagoons, I am almost moved to stay here a few days, even if I have to sleep in a hayloft and perform my ablutions

at the village pump. A blue-jersied broadsman lounging by the bridge is enthusiastic over the merits of the "best little four-tonner in Broadland"; in the Angel bar-room some anglers are rejoicing over the excellence of the local fishing. Slow-flowing river, sunny meads, grazing cattle, whispering reeds, and songful birds, all unite in tempting me to linger here—to keep away from the hot, dusty city; but with an effort I resist them. Amid the pastures and cornfields, I try to forget that I am abandoning the sleepy lowlands for busy streets, yachts for cabs, and thatched homesteads for electric lighted hotels; but when I have passed through Burlingham, and see the land sloping downward to the misty, leafy valley of the Yare, I can think of nothing in the cathedral city that will compensate me for the absence of the sedge warblers and the summer wind whispering through the reeds. So when at length I get a glimpse of the cathedral spire, apparently rising from the midst of a dense grove of trees, it is the most laggard of wayfarers who enters suburban Thorpe and sees the hedges give way to houses, and the farm waggons to electric trams.

But this Norwich is a grand old city, and if these were not the golden days of summer, and I had not so many miles to travel and so many pleasant places to see, I might well rest content if I ended my journeyings here, and devoted the rest of this book to an attempt to do something like justice to its cathedral, castle, fine old churches, and long roll of famous citizens. For many centuries it has been the chief town of East Anglia. Even so long ago as the days of the Iceni there was a large settlement here, and the Romans, when they sailed up the great estuary *Gariensis*, considered the place of sufficient importance to deserve the protection of one of their strongest camps. Later on the East Anglian kings held their courts on the great mound of unknown origin on which the castle stands, and when the castle was built, the city became the seat of the great Norman lords who ruled over Eastern England. After the Norman era—during which Ralph de Guader rebelled against

the Conqueror, the Bigods built their strongholds and founded many religious houses, and Lozinga removed the see of East Anglia from Thetford to Norwich and began that "Norman masterwork" the cathedral—the city fast increased in size and importance, until a time came when every leading Norfolk family felt bound to have a town house here, and only the lack of a court and king's palace made the citizens grudgingly admit that they were not quite so well off as those of London. The Erpinghams and Fastolffs, Boleyns and Pastons seldom cared to make the long journey to London when they could meet here and enjoy almost all the pleasures and advantages of London life. Men renowned for their learning early helped to extend the city's fame. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, whose life came to a tragic end on the Tower Hill, had a house in Surrey Street and another on Mousehold Heath. Dr. Caius lived here in the sixteenth century; and a little later Sir Thomas Browne left Shipley Hall and settled down to spend the rest of his days in a house which stood in the market place, near St. Peter Mancroft Church. Modern alterations have obliterated most of the traces of the existence here of those distinguished citizens, but cannot erase their names from the roll of fame. The reputation they gained for the old city was well maintained in later years by Borrow, Crome, the Martineaus, Cotman, the Opies, the Gurneys, and other members of that noted coterie which had its headquarters here during the latter part of the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth centuries. The Norwich School of Artists, founded by "Old Crome," has given us works which are among the most prized art treasures of England.

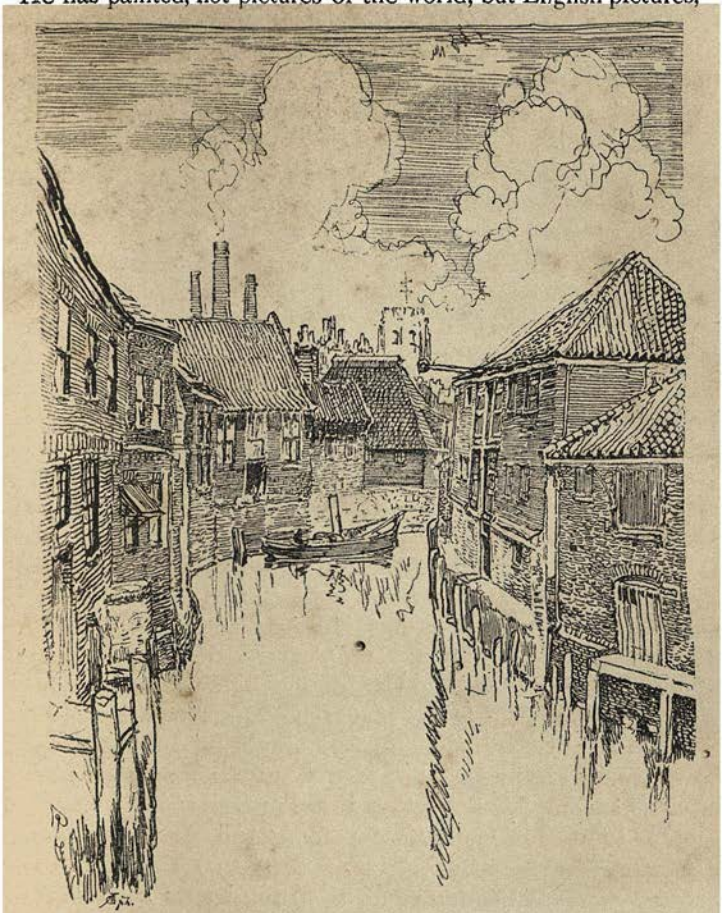
East Anglia has been prolific of painters, some of whom have become world-famous. Gainsborough was born at Sudbury; Constable was the son of a miller who lived at East Bergholt, on the Suffolk bank of the Stour; Crome's father was a journeyman weaver who kept an inn in one of the most disreputable quarters of Norwich; and Cotman was the son of

Bishop's Bridge, and the Cathedral, Norwich.

a Norwich silk-mercer. In the cases of Crome and Constable, and, in a less degree, in that of Cotman, these artists found

inspiration in the familiar scenes of their loved home-land. Constable's famous pictures, the "Valley Farm," the "Cornfield," and the "Hay Wain," all of which are in the National Gallery, were painted not far from the banks of the river by which he spent his childhood; Crome found the subjects for his "Windmill," "Mousehold Heath," and "Poringland Oak" in the neighbourhood of his native city. When Crome was a sign-painter's apprentice, he and his friend Ladbrooke, who was a printer's apprentice, lived together in a garret and devoted their spare time to copying prints. Now and again, when he could afford a holiday, Crome would ramble into the country and paint rural pictures, using an oyster shell for a palette. Everything was against his work ever rising above mediocrity: his general education had been of the scantiest, and for a long time the master sign-painter was his only instructor in art matters. William Beechey says that "Crome, when first I knew him, must have been about twenty years old, and was a very awkward, uninformed country lad, but extremely shrewd in all his remarks upon art, though he wanted words and terms to express his meaning." Both Crome and Ladbrooke, however, forced their way to the front, and in after years when George Borrow wished to impress upon his artist brother the needlessness of looking abroad for models when there were Gainsborough and Hogarth at home, and a living master in his own city, he thus declaimed "A living master? Why there he comes! thou hast had him long, he has long guided thy young hand towards the excellence which is yet far from thee, but which thou canst attain if thou shouldst persist and wrestle, even as he has done, midst gloom and despondency—ay, and even contempt; he who now comes up the creaking stair to thy little studio in the second floor to inspect thy last effort before thou departest, the little stout man whose face is very dark, and whose eye is vivacious; that man has attained excellence, destined some day to be acknowledged, though not

till he is cold, and his mortal part returned to its kindred clay. He has painted, not pictures of the world, but English pictures,



The River, Norwich.

such as Gainsborough himself might have done; beautiful rural pictures, with trees which might well tempt the little birds

to perch upon them: thou needst not run to Rome, brother, where lives the old Mariolater, after pictures of the world, whilst at home there are pictures of England; nor needst thou even go to London, the big city, in search of a master, for thou hast one at home in the old East Anglian town who can instruct thee whilst thou needst instruction: better stay at home, brother, at least for a season, and toil and strive, 'midst groanings and despondency, till thou hast attained excellence even as he has done—the little dark man with the brown coat and the top-boots, whose name will one day be considered the chief ornament of the old town, and whose works will at no distant period rank amongst the proudest pictures of England—and England against the world!—thy master, my brother, thy, at present, all too little considered master—Crome."

Borrow's ideas about art may not find general acceptance in art circles; but he was right about Crome's posthumous fame. Not every one will agree with him when he says that the painter's name will one day be the city's "chief ornament." Some, undoubtedly, will consider that modern pilgrims to Norwich should make their way to St. Peter Mancroft, and read a tablet there, before entering St. George Colegate and finding out the monument to Old Crome. For in St. Peter Mancroft were interred the remains of Sir Thomas Browne, and Sir Thomas Browne was one of the most learned men who ever dwelt in this grand old city. But Sir Thomas was not, like Crome, a native of the place: it was not until he was in his thirty-third year that he took up his abode here. His fame chiefly rests upon his *Religio Medici* and *Enquiry into Vulgar Errors*; but as a Norfolk man I may perhaps be forgiven if I like to think of him as an antiquary as well as a philosopher, and a naturalist as well as a scholar. I envy Evelyn his experiences on that morning when he called upon Sir Thomas and was shown "a collection of all the eggs of all the foule and birds he could procure," and was told that "that country, especially the promontory of Norfolck," was "frequented

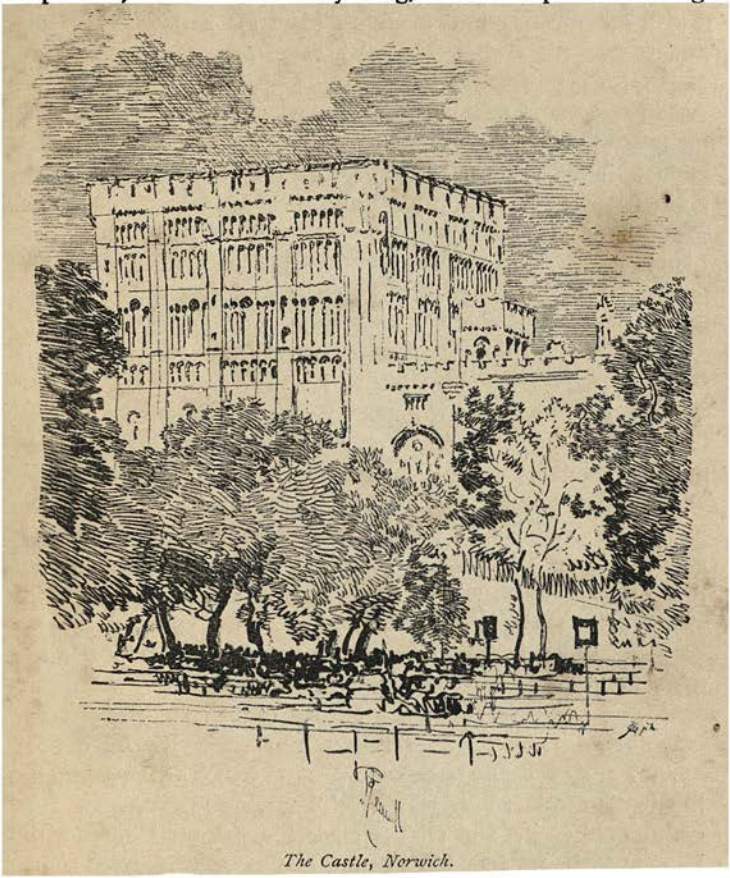
Market Place and St. Peter Mancroft Church, Norwich.

by several kinds, which seldom or never go further into the land, as cranes, storkes, eagles, and a variety of water-foule." After the learned doctor's death several treatises on the birds

and fishes of Norfolk were found among his papers, giving evidence of his delight in acquainting himself with the wild life of the county's rivers, shores, and marshes. He was the most renowned antiquary of his day. If an urn were unearthed at Old Walsingham or Caister, or a Roman coin at Thetford, he was sure to hear of it. It was the digging up of some funeral urns near Norwich that suggested the writing of his famous *Urn Burial*. Such a subject could not but have a fascination for a mind such as his, for, as the late John Addington Symonds says, it is around such topics that "his thought eddies like a dark and swirling stream," adding that "there is something inconclusive in the habit of his fancy, a delight in intellectual twilight, a moth-like flitting to and fro in regions where no certainty can be attained."

"When the funeral pyre was out, and the last valediction over," wrote Sir Thomas in an "Epistle Dedicatory" at the beginning of *Urn Burial*, "men took a lasting adieu of their interred friends, little expecting the curiosity of future ages should comment upon their ashes; and, having no old experiences of the duration of their relicks, held no opinion of such after considerations. But who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? Who hath the oracle of his ashes or whither they are to be scattered?" It would almost seem that Sir Thomas, when he wrote those words, was thinking of the possible fate of his own bones. At any rate, many readers of his works must have been struck with the truth of them when they read of what occurred at Norwich in 1840, just a hundred and fifty-eight years after his death. I quote from the *Gentleman's Magazine*:—"Some workmen, who were employed in digging a vault in the chancel of the church of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, accidentally broke with a blow of the pickaxe the lid of a coffin, which proved to be that of one whose residence within its walls conferred honour on Norwich in old times. This circumstance afforded me an opportunity of inspecting the remains. The bones of the

skeleton were found to be in good preservation, particularly those of the skull. The forehead was remarkably low and depressed, the head unusually long, the back part exhibiting



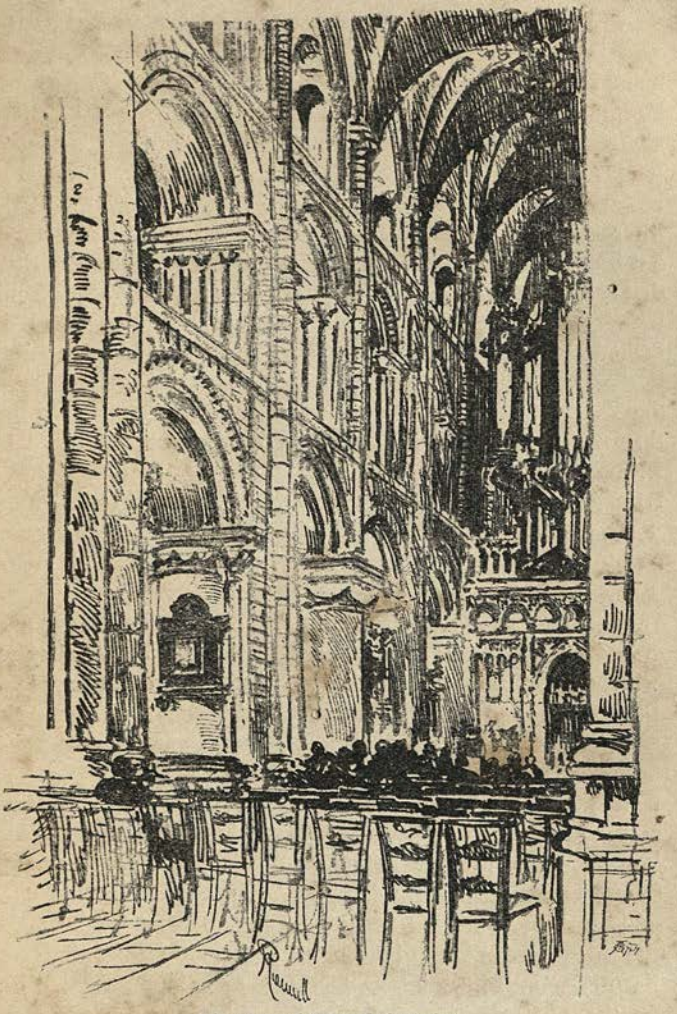
The Castle, Norwich.

an uncommon appearance of depth and capaciousness. . . . Instead of restoring the remains to the grave, the sexton dishonestly appropriated the skull and hair, which he offered

for sale, and they were purchased by a Dr. Lubbock, in whose collection they remained until the year 1847, when they were presented to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital Museum. It is said that Sir Thomas Browne's skull is exhibited with the remains of the malefactors who were executed in front of Norwich Castle."

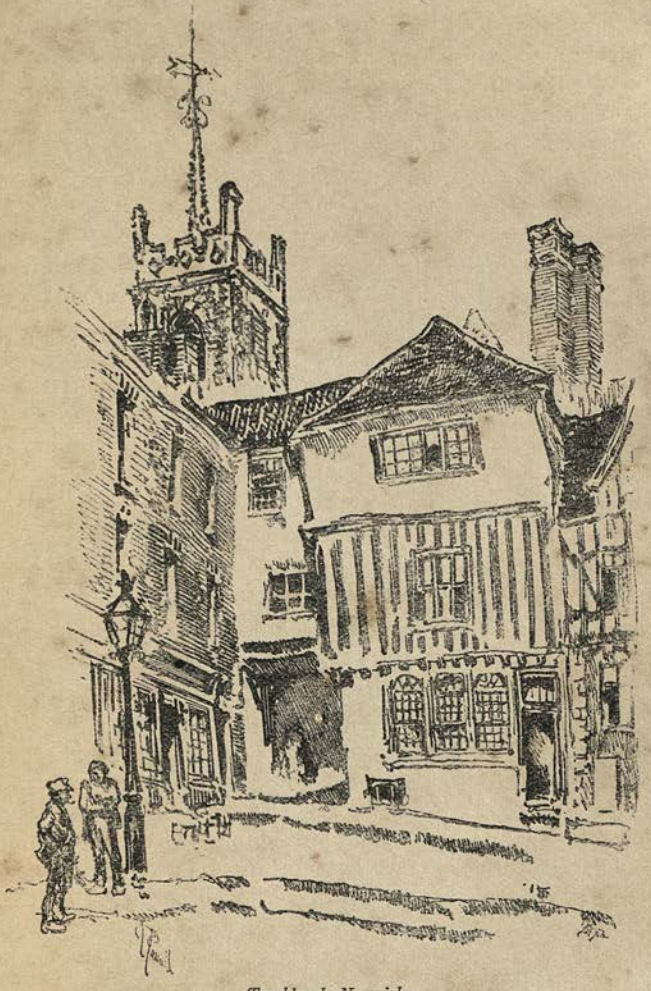
When one sees how the square old castle, raised on its prehistoric mound, dominates its surroundings, it is impossible not to regret that its history is so incommensurate with its structural dignity. For since the death of the last of the Bigods no event of historical importance, save the hanging of the unfortunate Kett, has been connected with it, and even before 1345, when it was turned into a county gaol, it played only a small part in the making of East Anglian history. True, in the eleventh century, when Ralph de Guader was its Constable, his wife held it for three months against the King's troops; and in the thirteenth century it was for a while in the possession of Louis, the French Dauphin; but that is practically all the old chroniclers have to tell us concerning it. For more than five hundred years it was a gaol; and it is only of late years, since it has contained the finest museum outside the metropolis, that it has possessed other interest than attaches to its grim old Norman keep and dismal dungeons. As a museum it is likely to attain to an importance far greater than is conferred upon it by its historical associations.

It is an imposing structure; but the castle itself consists of only the old keep; all the rest of the buildings on the castle mound are of comparatively recent date. The view from the battlements is a grand one, for the castle stands in the centre of the city, and all the city's important buildings can be seen from it. Indeed, if I were a stranger in Norwich, and had only a little time in which to see the city, I would, I think, content myself with this view of it, and leave the place conscious of having seen almost everything a stranger here could



The Nave of Norwich Cathedral

wish to see. Even if I came away with only vague impressions of many of the buildings I had gazed upon, I could not help being struck with the extent and charming surroundings of the Norfolk capital. Norwich has been called the "City of Churches" and the "City in an Orchard." How well these names apply to it can only be appreciated by those who see it from the battlements of the keep. Look upon the city wherever you will and you will see church towers standing out boldly above the roofs of the houses; and beyond them that sylvan, heathland, and pastoral scenery amid which Crome found the subjects of his greatest pictures. Away beyond the cathedral the heather and gorse-clad heights of Mousehold are backed by pleasant woodlands; eastward is the sunlit valley of the Yare. Right at your feet is that famous cattle mart where Borrow, escaped from his desk in a lawyer's office, fraternised with the horse-dealing gipsies from the historical heath. On Saturdays, when the mart is thronged with cattle and dealers, you have little difficulty in imagining the scene it presented in Borrow's day; and a glimpse of a swarthy face among many ruddy ones may help you to understand the feelings of the silent, moody youth who saw some strange-looking men on horseback forcing their way through the crowd. "They are widely different in their appearance from the other people of the fair; not so much in dress, for they are clad something after the fashion of rustic jockeys, but in their look—no light brown hair have they, no ruddy cheeks, no blue quiet glances belong to them; their features are dark, their locks long, black, and shining, and their eyes are wild; they are admirable horsemen, but they do not sit the saddle in the manner of common jockeys, they seem to float or hover upon it, like gulls upon the waves; two of them are mere striplings, but the third is a very tall man with a countenance heroically beautiful, but wild, wild, wild." And a few minutes later, here on the Castle Hill, the youthful *sapengro*, or snake-charmer, of Norman Cross again meets Jasper Petulengro, his "pal,"



Tombland, Norwich.

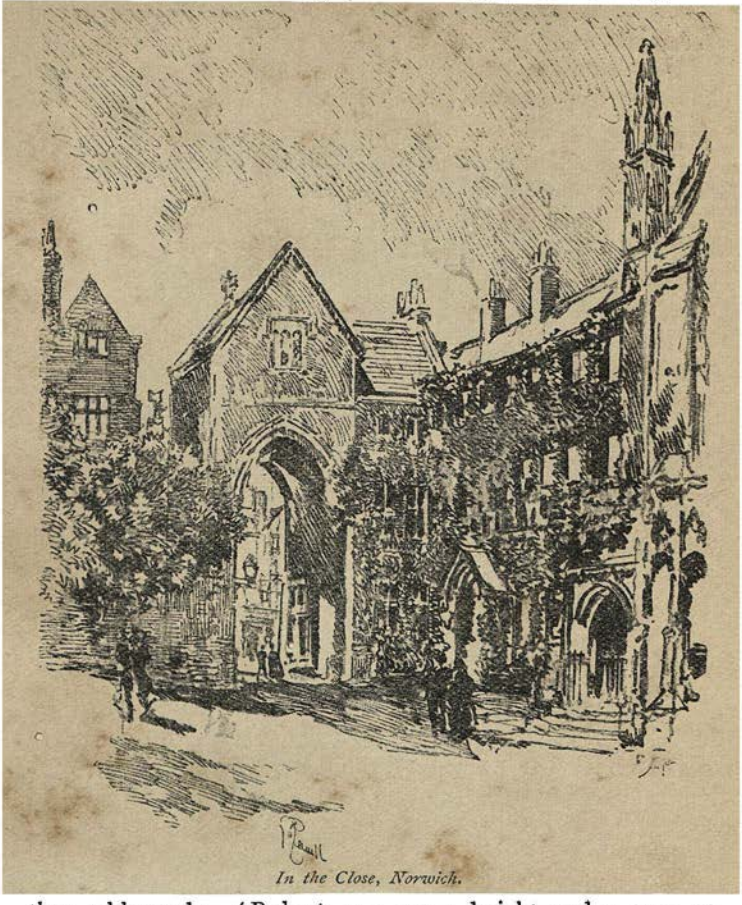
The cathedral's story goes some way to make up for the lack of stirring episodes in the castle's history. Its founding

was contemporary with that of an adjoining monastery whose occupants seem to have been active and sturdy representatives of the church militant. Very soon after the monastery was established the monks got on bad terms with the citizens, mainly, it appears, on account of disputes as to the citizens' right to interfere with what went on within the monastery, and claims concerning a piece of open ground still known as Tombland, which was close to the monks' quarters. On this open space an annual fair was held for several centuries, and in the thirteenth century fair day seldom passed without a set-to —a sort of town and gown affair—between the citizens and the monks or the monks' retainers. At length feeling ran so high that the contests, instead of being simply boisterous, became bloody, and several citizens were killed. This naturally exasperated the Norwich people, who got a warrant issued for the arrest of the slayers; but the monks, secure behind their strong, high walls, not only laughed at the warrant, but amused themselves by stoning and shooting at such careless citizens as tried to take a quiet stroll across Tombland. The quarrel reached a climax on the Sunday before St. Lawrence's Day, 1272, when the monks sallied forth in force and gave the citizens the liveliest of times, killing some, plundering the houses of others, and generally diverting themselves in a manner which in monks was surprising. They ended the day in a tavern, and after a jovial carouse, in which they laughed and quaffed as long as they were able, returned home and rendered to the prior an account of their day's doings. That day's diversion proved more than the citizens could stand—it was the proverbial last straw. The magistrates sent a message to the King, telling him what had happened; and then called a mass meeting of citizens to consider how they might best defend themselves against monkish vagaries. The meeting must have been well attended, and the citizens surprised at their strength in numbers, for instead of discussing the matter which had brought them together they went in a

body to the monastery, burnt the close-gates and an adjoining church, set fire to several of the conventual buildings, and carried off all the valuables they could lay hands on. Several of the clerks and laymen were killed, but the prior contrived to escape to Yarmouth, where he raised an armed force and led it against the Norwich citizens. Having done his best to prove to them how dangerous it was to attack the church or its representatives, he withdrew from the city to await the intervention of the King. The latter called a meeting of the hierarchy, and as a result of its investigations all persons concerned in the riots were excommunicated and several of the ringleaders either hanged or dragged about the streets by horses till they died. The prior was sent to prison, for it was agreed that his conduct before the outbreak had not been all it ought to have been. The citizens were ordered to contribute three thousand marks towards the restoration of the cathedral, and to pay one hundred pounds for a new pix.

About a century later another militant churchman, Henry le Spencer, Bishop of Norwich, distinguished himself by his personal prowess in arms and skill as a leader of men. The event which brought him to the front, and gave him an opportunity for displaying his martial enterprise, was a local insurrection contemporary with those of Jack Straw and Wat Tyler. Excessive taxation, and the prospect of its becoming even more unbearable, led to the peasants' rising. In Suffolk they flocked to the standard of Jack Straw, but in Norfolk their chosen leader was a certain John Littester, a Norwich dyer. Apparently, however, he was only intended to be a temporary commander, for Froissart tells us that the rebels were very anxious that Sir Robert Salle, the Governor of Norwich, who was the handsomest and strongest man in England, but "not by birth a gentleman," should become their leader. With a view to ascertaining his feelings, Sir Robert was sent for, and as the rebels threatened to attack and burn the city if he

refused to come to them, he thought it best to visit their camp. He was received with every mark of respect and courtesy, and



In the Close, Norwich.

thus addressed:— 'Robert, you are a knight and a man of great weight in this county, renowned for your valour; yet, notwithstanding all this, we know who you are: you are not a

gentleman, but the son of a poor mason, just as ourselves. Do you come with us as our commander, and we will make so great a lord of you that one quarter of England shall be under your command."

The rebels either mistook their man or (which seems equally likely) rubbed him the wrong way. Anyhow, his mind was soon made up, and, in spite of his precarious position, he let them have it straight from the shoulder. "Begone," he said, "wicked scoundrels and false traitors as you are; would you have me desert my natural lord for such blackguards as you are? Would you have me dishonour myself? I would much rather you were all hanged, for that must be your end." And then, says Froissart, "he attempted to mount his horse; but, his foot slipping in the stirrup, his horse took fright. Then they shouted out and cried 'Put him to death.' When he heard this he let his horse go; and drawing a handsome Bordeaux sword, he began to skirmish, and soon cleared the crowd from about him, that it was a pleasure to see. Some attempted to close with him; but with each stroke he gave he cut off heads, arms, feet, or legs. There were none so bold but were afraid; and Sir Robert that day performed marvellous feats of arms. These wretches were upwards of 40,000: they shot and flung at him such things that had he been clothed with steel instead of being unarmed he must have been overpowered: however, he killed twelve of them, besides many whom he wounded. At last he was overthrown, when they cut off his legs and arms, and his body into piece-meals."

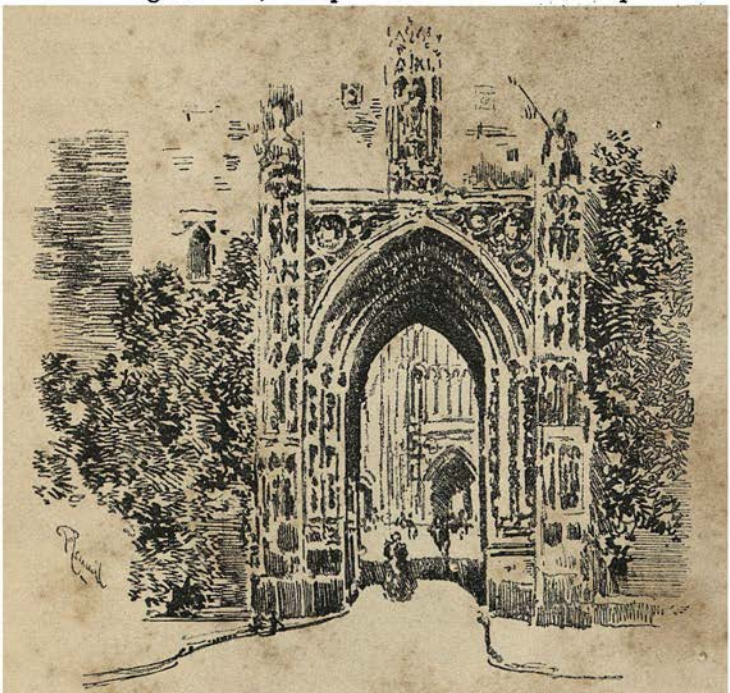
For an account of Bishop Spencer's suppression of the revolt, we must turn to the writings of Thomas de Walsingham, where we learn that Littester, who styled himself the King of the Commons, carried things with a high hand and compelled several Norfolk knights to act as his servants. For a while he and his followers did very much as they liked; but their conduct at length became so outrageous that Bishop Spencer thought they had gone far enough, and determined to put

an end to their lawless actions. The knights and other county gentlemen, who seem to have stood in awe of the rebels, were glad to support the priest-militant who "wore a helmet and a coat of mail, and carried a sword in his hand," and he soon got together an army strong enough to justify him in taking to the field. At the head of this army he marched to North Walsham, near which town the rebels were encamped. He found they had "surrounded their encampment with a deep fosse, over which they had placed tables and windows, and doors and pales, as an additional defence; and in the rear he saw their waggons and carts, for they little thought of flight." Their confident air and defiant attitude enraged the belligerent bishop, who ordered the trumpets to sound the charge, seized a lance, set spurs to his horse, and rushed so impetuously at the foe that he reached the summit of their defences before the arrows of his own archers. Incited by his example, his followers were soon engaged in a hand to hand fight with the rebels in the fosse. "The martial prelate," says Thomas de Walsingham, "grinding his teeth like a wild boar, and sparing neither himself nor his enemies, wherever he saw his troops in danger instantly directed all his energies to that point, stabbing one, knocking down another, and wounding a third; nor did he relax his exertions till all his soldiers had cleared the fosse and were ready for the conflict. Then followed a fierce conflict on both sides, but at length the people gave way, and as their carts and waggons hindered their flight in that direction, tried to scramble through the neighbouring woods; but the Bishop, like an experienced general, frustrated their object, and having captured the principal leaders, including John Littester their King, gained a complete victory."

Content with having played with effect the part of a military commander, the Bishop then became a priest again, and devoted himself to preparing John Littester, "the Idol of Norfolk," for his inevitable fate. He received his confession, granted him absolution, and afterwards accompanied him to

his execution, and supported him when he was dragged to the gibbet.

A later bishop of Norwich was even more skilled with the pen than was Bishop Spencer with the sword, and his satire, while all in good taste, was quite as keen as the earlier prelate's



Erpingham Gate, Norwich.

weapon. This was Bishop Hall, who, in addition to his satirical works, wrote *Hard Measure*, that notable complaint concerning the treatment he had received on account of his championship of the cause of Prelacy. His old palace is still standing at Heigham, and is known as the Dolphin Inn. It is a delightfully picturesque building, and has more the

appearance of an old coaching inn than a palace. If it were not so far from the city it would probably be as famous and flourishing an inn as the old Maid's Head in Tombland, which is one of the most ancient inns in England, and claims to date from 1287. Long before Bishop Hall came to Norwich he held a living in what he calls "that sweet and civil county of Suffolk," where a brother divine, taking compassion upon the "uncouth solitariness" of his life, set himself the task of finding him a wife. He said nothing about his matrimonial project, however, until one day when he and Hall were on their way to a certain wedding-feast. As they approached the house where the festival was to be held, Hall's attention was drawn to a "comely and modest gentlewoman" standing at the door. He asked his friend if he knew her, and received the astonishing response, "Yes, I know her, and have bespoken her for your wife." Hall naturally wished for an explanation, and the match-making minister told him that the gentlewoman he so much admired was the daughter of Mr. George Whinniff, of Brettenham, a gentleman to whom he had already suggested the alliance and who was quite prepared to agree to it Hall, who all his life was for peace and quietness, and probably at the end of his days had experienced as little of either as any man, presumably could not find it in his heart to dash the hopes and upset the schemes of a friend so solicitous of his comfort and interest. So having satisfied himself that the "modesty, piety, good disposition, and other virtues that were lodged in that seemly presence" had not been unduly exaggerated, he assented to the match made for him, and "upon due prosecution" of his suit, "happily prevailed, enjoying the comfortable society of that meet-help for the space of forty-nine years."

Writing of the old monks and bishops of Norwich reminds me of a legend which, if it were true, would go some way to prove that the Norwich monks were not only often at loggerheads with the citizens on account of land disputes, but

sometimes caused unpleasantness by their too kindly interest in the citizens' women-folk. According to the legend, even the famous Sir Thomas Erpingham—he who fought at Agincourt and built the beautiful gate of which Norwich is justly proud—had cause to complain of their amorous proclivities. For we are told that when he returned home from the wars and settled down at Norwich his lady was bothered by the attentions of a certain Friar John, who became enamoured of her beauty and at length addressed a letter to her in which he asked for a meeting. This interesting missive Dame Erpingham, like a dutiful spouse, handed to her husband, who replied to it on her behalf, fixed a place of meeting, and, to the monastic Tartuffe's amazement and discomfiture, kept it in person and proceeded to give him the drubbing he well deserved. Unfortunately, Sir John allowed his indignation to exceed his discretion, for he finished his belabouring by bestowing upon the friar a buffet which knocked out what little life was left in him. Then, anxious to avoid suspicion of having caused his death, he instructed a faithful servant to hoist Friar John's body over the monastery wall and place it, in a sitting posture, in one of the out-buildings. Here it was seen by Friar Richard, an old enemy of Friar John, who, as the latter seemed unaware of his presence, seized the opportunity and threw a brick at him. The brick struck the dead monk's body, which fell to the ground; and Friar Richard, fearful of being accused of the murder, dropped the body over the monastery wall.

Not long afterwards Sir Thomas Erpingham's retainer chanced to come by, and was amazed to find the body he thought he had satisfactorily disposed of. Knowing that he was relied upon to divert all suspicion from his master, he conjured his brain till he thought of another plan for getting rid of the corpse. At last an idea struck him. Fetching a suit of rusty mail, he dressed the dead monk in it, placed him on the back of a worn-out horse which was grazing near the monastery, and there left him. Meanwhile Friar Richard, much troubled by an

uneasy conscience, had decided to flee from the city. As an excuse for leaving the monastery, he suggested he should go out for some meal. Having obtained permission to do so, he took some meal bags, mounted a horse, and set out with the avowed intention of riding to a mill. Scarcely had he left the monastery gate when he heard the clattering of hoofs behind him, and, looking back, was horrified to find himself pursued by a mounted, mail-clad warrior. Urging his horse to the utmost the friar fled; but his pursuer gradually gained upon him, and at length the two steeds came in contact. Then the mailed rider fell to the ground, his helmet came off, and the face of Friar John was revealed. This unaccountable encounter so terrified Friar Richard that he went straight away and confessed the crime he believed himself guilty of, and would in all probability have been executed if Sir Thomas Erpingham had not heard of his trouble, and explained the real circumstances of the monk's death. Unfortunately, a similar story to this is told of other knights and friars in other countries than England.

A story without the humorous relief which enlivens that of Dame Erpingham and Friar John is that of "St. William the Boy and Martyr," a youthful saint to whom there was once a shrine here. Blomefield tells us that this William was the son of a certain Wenstan and Elwina, daughter of Welward the Priest, and that he was bound apprentice to a Norwich tanner. For some reason or other this unlucky boy excited the ire of the local Jews, who about Eastertide enticed him into a house and there "gagged him, bound, mocked, and crucified him with great torment, wounding him on his left side." Having killed him, they placed his body in a sack and bore it secretly into the midst of Thorpe Wood, hoping to be able to bury it unobserved. But as they entered the wood they were seen by one Eilward, a Norwich citizen, who, suspicious of their strange movements and curious as to what was in the sack, silently followed them until he ascertained that they were hiding a human body.

His surprise at this discovery betrayed his presence to the murderers, who, fearing they might be caught with the body in their possession, fled with it into the darkest depths of the wood and there hanged it on a tree. Returning home, they took counsel with other Jews as to how they might escape the just punishment of their crime. As a result of their discussions the city sheriff was approached and offered a hundred marks if he would "free them from their danger." This the corrupt official agreed to do, and sending for Eilward, forced him to take oath that he would never so long as he lived reveal what he had seen or accuse the Jews of the murder. For five years Eilward kept his oath; but on his death-bed, haunted by his recollections of the crime, he disburdened his soul of its secret. Apparently Thorpe Wood was in those days (some nine hundred years ago) little frequented, for the body of the murdered boy had remained there undiscovered; but it was now found and interred in the monastery burying-ground. There it rested until 1150; but many miracles having by that time been wrought by it, it was then removed into the monastery church and enshrined. And, says Blomefield, "the boy-saint became so famous for the many miracles said to be wrought here, that Thomas, a monk of Monmouth, who was by his abbot assigned to write *history* (the italics are Blomefield's), pitched upon this fact, it being done in his own time, and accordingly he wrote seven books about William the Boy and Martyr and one about the Miracles done by him."

Late in the afternoon I cross the old Bishop's Bridge—on which, in the thirteenth century, a hermit lived—and climb the hill-road leading on to Mousehold Heath. The setting sun shines warmly on the gorsy hillocks; but into the dingles where Borrow's gipsy friends, the Petulengros, used to camp, the shadows are creeping, silencing the linnets and whinchats which have flitted from bush to bush all through the summer

day. Leaving the footpath I ramble knee-deep in bracken and ling into the midst of the heath, meeting only two schoolboys who are peering into the gorse-clumps in search of linnets' nests. Wishing to get away from every indication of modern cultivating of this wide stretch of heathland, I hasten on until I have left the new shrubberies and rows of rhododendrons behind me. Then I can form some idea of what Mousehold was like three centuries and a half ago, when it was the scene of one of the most shameful battles ever fought in England. As I climb the knolls on which the followers of Kett, the Wymondham tanner, encamped during nine eventful weeks of a long-gone summer, I ask myself what the men in the great cavalry barracks yonder would say if ordered to slay thousands of Norfolk peasants who were willing to return to their homes if only they were granted a few reasonable reforms. But I forget. They were not English soldiers, but for the most part foreign mercenaries who fought the Norfolk rebels. Still they were in the army of an English King and fought under English commanders.

It is a sad story—one of the saddest in the history of Eastern England since the Romans failed to respect the trust of Prasutagus, King of the Iceni, and wrested the country from the hands of his widowed queen. The Norfolk rebellion was the natural result of harsh treatment and many grievances. For a long time discontent had smouldered in the county, or only found expression in fireside growlings and muttered curses upon the "covetous cormorants," as Bernard Gilpin called the lords of the manors, who took it for "no offence to turn poor men out of their lands." But in the summer of 1549 the smouldering fire burst into flame. At Wymondham, Attleborough, Eccles, and Hethersett, bands of determined rustics armed themselves with pikes and scythes and swore to abolish certain abuses existing in church and state. Robert Kett, a tanner by trade, but a man of some means and education, was elected their leader, and under his direction

the bands united and marched through Norwich to Mousehold Heath. At first some sort of order was preserved among the insurgents; but their assembling led to the congregating of a host of questionable characters, glad of any excuse for indulging in robbery and debauchery. In a few days 20,000 men were encamped on the heath, where they built themselves turf huts and roofed them with boughs. Their presence was very unwelcome to the Norwich citizens, for Kett converted the Earl of Surrey's fine mansion into a gaol and imprisoned

Norwich from Mousehold Heath.

in it all the leading gentlemen of the county he could capture. Among them was the Mayor of the city, who was brought out of prison from time to time and compelled to assist at a court which Kett held daily under a tree called the Oak of Reformation. Many depredations were undoubtedly committed, both in Norwich and the surrounding district; but these were probably the result of hunger or the work of the thievish rapscallions who had joined the reformers. As Mr. Froude remarks, "Considering the wild character of the assemblage, the order

observed was remarkable." There is no reason for doubting that Kett and the better informed of his supporters were disinclined to resort to strong measures unless an unsatisfactory answer was made to a petition they had sent to the King.

That petition is a pathetic document, and many writers have done Kett and his followers an injustice in ignoring its existence. It contains a list of the grievances under which the Norfolk peasants were labouring; and to modern minds it may well seem amazing that neither King, Privy Council, nor Parliament were able to discover means by which the petitioners' wrongs might be redressed, their anger appeased, and bloodshed avoided. The peasants pleaded that lords of manors should be prevented from enclosing any more common-lands; that "rede-grounde and meadowe grounde may be at suche price as they were in the first yere of King henry the seventh; that all bushells within your realm be of one stice, that is to say, to be in measure eight gallons; that prests or vicars that be not able to preche and sett forth the woorde of God to hys parisheners may be thereby putt from hys benyfice; that all bonde men may be ffre, for God made all ffre with hys precious blode sheddyng; that all ryvers may be ffre and comon to all men for fyshyng and passage; that the pore mariners or fyshermene may have whole profights of their fyshyngs as purpses (porpoises), grampes (grampuses), whalles, or any grett fyshe, so it be not prejudicall to your grace;" that in every parish some one might be appointed to "teche pore mens chyldren of ther paryshe the boke called the Cathakysme and the prymer"—but I cannot go on through the whole Harleian manuscript. Suffice it to say, there was no reform suggested or benefit asked that did not deserve the careful consideration of the authorities.

The King, we are told, looked upon it as an indignity to his person that such a petition should be addressed to him; but he promised that if the peasants returned to their homes and gathered in the harvest, he would approach Parliament and see

what could be done in the way of reforms. Kett may have been willing to await the fulfilment of this promise; but some of his followers had, by the time it was made, got out of hand and were scouring the country, burning and pillaging as they went. Still, the greater number of them remained on Mousehold, where, on a July day, a herald arrived and promised pardon to "all that wolde humbly submit themselves and depart quietly every man to his howse to enjoye the benefyt thereof." A few weak spirits were inclined to make the required submission; but the majority were of Kett's opinion when he replied to the herald, "Kings are wont to pardon wicked persons—not innocent and just men. We have done nothing to deserve such pardon and have been guilty of no crime. We therefore despise such idle speeches as unprofitable to our purpose." After this the Norwich citizens were in worse trouble than ever, for the insurgents, getting impatient, resorted to bows and arrows instead of arguments. A small body of troops sent by the Privy Council, and commanded by the Marquis of Northampton, was defeated after some tough fighting, in which, according to an old chronicler, the rebels, "half dead, drowned in their own and other men's bloud, even to the last gasp, furiously withstood our men when they could scarce hold their weapons. Yea, many also strooken thorow the brests with swordes, and the synewes of their legs cut asunder, yet creeping on their knees, were mooved with such furie, as they wounded our souldiers lying amongst the slaine, almost without life." So these Norfolk peasants—men accustomed to handle only the spade and reaping-hook—fought for what they considered to be their just rights!

In the face of this defeat of its troops, the Privy Council could not but realise the seriousness of the Norfolk outbreak, and decided that there must be no more half measures—that the sturdy insurgents must be crushed by a strong force. So the Earl of Warwick, then about to lead an expedition into Scotland, was despatched to Norwich, and with him a consider-

able army, largely made up of foreign mercenaries. He found the city practically in the rebels' hands, and his soldiers had to make breaches in the walls before they could enter it. Even then his task was no easy one, for his troops, unacquainted with the highways and byways of the city, found it difficult to dislodge the bands of peasants who surprised them at street corners, and came down upon them from side-streets and alleys. After a good deal of skirmishing, however, in which many lives were lost, Kett's men were compelled to retreat to Dussyn's Dale, on Mousehold, where they determined to make a stand, and risk everything in one last strenuous effort for victory.

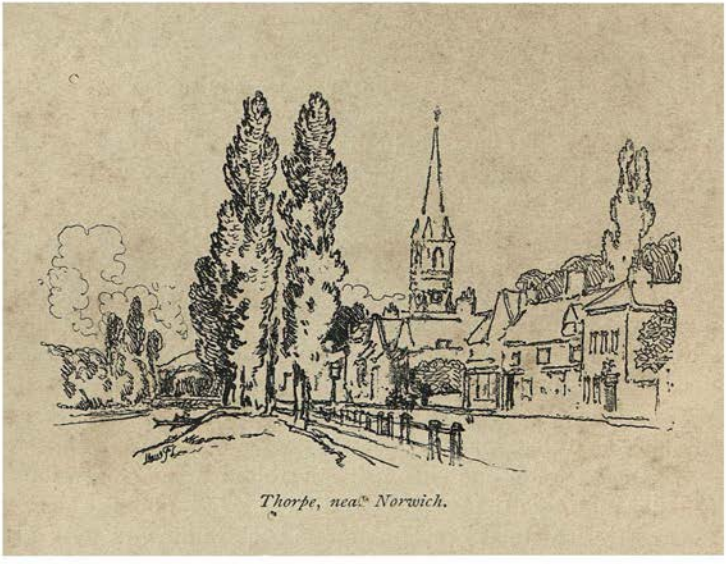
The final battle was fought on an August day about two months after the raising of the standard of revolt. Setting fire to their turf huts, the insurgents, under cover of the smoke which drifted over the heath, swarmed down into the dale and attacked the Earl's army. From the outset of the conflict, the result was a foregone conclusion, for the Earl had received reinforcements since he entered the city, and as Kett's followers had had no experience of artillery they were soon thrown into confusion. Still they fought desperately, and not until 2,000 —some say 3,000 and 3,500—of them were slain did the rest surrender. The losses on the Earl's side were, in comparison, small; but in the register of burials kept in St. Simon's Church is the following entry:—

> Henry Wylby, of Middleton Hall, in the county of Warwick, esquire,
> Gyles ffoster, of Temple Balsall in the same county, esq.,
> Thomas Lyusye (Lucy), of Charlecoot, in the same county, esq.,
> —— Lusonn, of—besid North Hampton, esquire:
> Thes 4 esquires weare slayne in the King's army on Mushold Heath, the Tewestaye being the xxvijtie daye of August, 1549, anno tertio Edwardi Sexti, and were all buryed in the chauncell of this church in one grave."

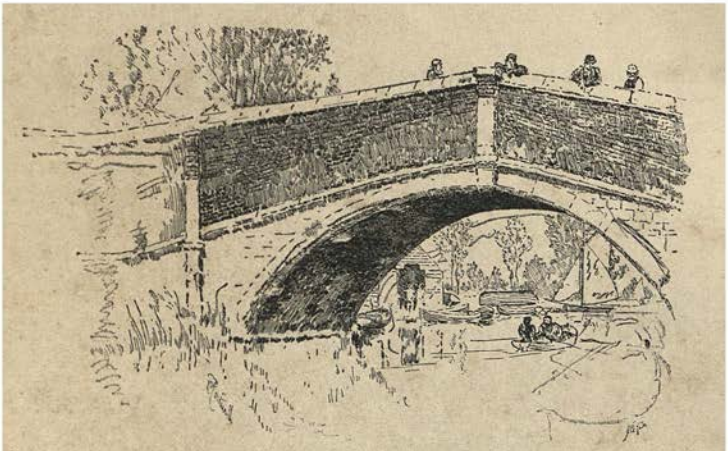
The unlucky leader of the insurgents escaped from the battle-field; but was captured next day at Swannington, where he was hiding in a barn. For three months he lay in the Tower, awaiting the common fate of sixteenth century reformers. Then he was brought back to Norwich and hanged from the castle walls. Nine of the ringleaders in the revolt were hanged from the Oak of Reformation (it is gone now, and there is scarcely a tree standing on the heath); forty-five others were hanged, drawn, and quartered in Norwich market-place. Three hundred insurgents in all are said to have been executed; and Warwick's reason for not doubling the number is found in his remark, "What shall we do then? hold the plough ourselves, play the carters, and labour the ground with our own hands?" In St. Peter Mancroft, the grand old church in the market-place, the Earl and the Norwich citizens gave thanks to God for victory and deliverance. From the Oak of Reformation swung the bodies of those who desired that all bondmen might be free; in the market place the stones were stained with the blood of fathers who had pleaded that "pore men's chyldren" might be taught "the boke called the Cathakysme and the prymer." We cherish the memory of men who have died for less than this, and call them martyrs!

Dusk comes down upon the heath while I wander over the low hills on which the rebels built their rude huts; but the glare of the Norwich street lights guides me back to the city. As I pick my way through gorse and bramble, stumbling now and again over a twisted root, or startling a sleeping bird from its cover, I am glad to forget Mousehold's grim associations, and think only of the nights when Borrow used to steal out of the city and join the gipsies round their camp fires on the heath. There are no gipsies on Mousehold now—I doubt whether even the civic authorities of the place in which Lavengro dwelt will permit them to light a fire or pitch a tent here. Yet who would not walk many miles, even through wind and rain, to meet a Jasper Petulengro, and hear him talk of the many

sweet pleasures of a gipsy's life? "There's the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that I would gladly live for ever." It was of the wind on Mousehold Heath Jasper was thinking when he uttered these words; and when that wind does not blow from beyond the smoky city it is as sweet to-day as ever!



Thorpe, near Norwich.



Wroxham Bridge.

CHAPTER V

THE BROADLAND

CAN anything new be said about the Norfolk Broadland? If so, I shall be only too glad to hear of it, so that I may be able to set down something here which will claim attention. It is an unthankful task to follow in the steps of one writer who has set his mind on doing justice to a district; but when one has a hundred predecessors, each of whom has, by the conditions of travel, been compelled to follow practically the same river-routes, there cannot be much left for a late-comer on the scene to deal with. To whose benefit will it tend if I tell of the quiet enchantment of Wroxham Broad, the golden glories of the Broadland sunsets, and the placid enjoyment of cruising on the inland waterways, when all these things, though comparatively recent discoveries, are not only as a tale that is told, but as a tale that has been re-told until most people know every word of it? Is it surprising then, that at the outset of my venturing upon some description of Broadland I find my pen halting while I try to discover some aspect of

Broadland life I can deal with in such a way as to make a worn theme a welcome one?

Then, there is another reason for my hesitancy. I have seen so much of the Broadland, spent so many days by its riversides and nights on its waterways, that I fear I may be tempted to make much of little in describing what is so familiar to me. I have no right to expect that the chuckling of a sedge warbler in a reed bed will mean so much to every one as it does to me; or that a man who is able to spend a few days only in sailing on the Yare, Bure, and Waveney will appreciate the scenery, wild life, and hamlet life associated with those slow winding streams, as I do who have known them from my earliest days. For to *know* Broadland and fully understand what a unique and interesting district it is, a man must see more of it than is visible during a summer cruise on its broads and rivers. He must see it in spring, when the dark brown shoots of sedge are springing up like lance-heads by the waterside, and the warblers are returning to the reed shoals and sallow carrs; in late autumn, when the fog hides the marshes, the hooded crows croak harshly on the river-walls, and birds whose quavering plaint lately broke the silence of northern ice-fields are heard on the Breydon flats and around the reed-fringed lagoons; and in winter, when the rivers are deserted save for the trading wherries and reed-cutters' rafts, and even by them when the frost has fettered their watery highways. The summer voyager on Broadland rivers never sees Hoody scavenging among the heaps of water-weeds left on the dyke-banks by the marshmen, nor can he hope to experience that delight which a native of the district feels when he goes down to the riverside one morning and finds that, after a long and wearying flight from South Africa, the sedge warblers have come back to their old haunts, and the grasshopper warblers are reeling out their strange songs on the water-meadows. The methods of the punt-gunners on the tidal waters and the eel-catchers of the Bure and Thurne

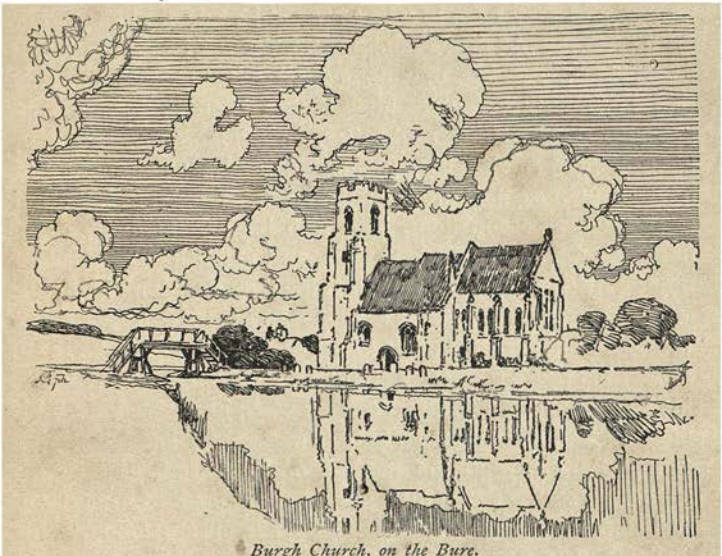
must remain a mystery to him, so long as he is content with idle drifting down the rivers on sunny summer days; and he cannot hope that many of the secrets of the wild creatures of the lowlands will be revealed to him. If he wishes to solve those mysteries he must not mind enduring a few hardships. He must be ready to "rough it" with the men who spend the bitter winter nights in cramped little houseboats on the rivers or in trudging mile after mile along muddy river-walls and over swampy rush-marshes. Instead of lounging about in boating flannels, he must don weather-proof garments, including marsh-boots which reach above the knee; and he must risk the chill douche which results from mistaking "hover" for "rond" by the riverside. From a yacht's deck he will never see the redshank's beautiful eggs in their grass-cup on the water-meadows, or the dainty pink bog pimpernels trailing over the bright-hued bog-mosses.

While I write my brain is filled by a rush of recollections. I am back again in a water-bailiff's houseboat on the Waveney. My companion is an old broadsman, who has lived his life on the rivers, meres, and marshes. The door of the houseboat is open, and we are watching the air bubbles which a shoal of bream is sending up to the surface of a narrow creek. Somewhere amid the lush grass of a neighbouring meadow a cock pheasant is crowing; near a windmill which has lost two of its sails a kestrel has been hovering ever since it appeared from beyond a fir-crested ridge on the border of the marshes. Seated at the end of the long wooden locker which serves the water-bailiff for a table by day and a bed by night, I can watch the wherries sailing down the river, their large dark sails sometimes brushing the reedy banks like gigantic birds' wings. There is scarcely wind enough to fill the sails; so the wherrymen, lounging listlessly at the tiller, let their gaze wander from the river to the far-spreading, cattle-dotted marshes. Towards Somerleyton the river takes such a winding course that much of it is hidden by the "walls" which protect the marshes, and

the wherries seem to be sailing hull-deep in a wide green sea. All day the water-bailiff and I have been afloat in a little lug-sail punt, and though we have caught no fish-poachers drawnetting the river we have not spent an idle day. That is to say, we have not been what we would call idle. At a riverside inn near the quaint old church at Burgh St. Peter, we learnt from a wherryman that the herons had again tried to establish a colony at Burgh Castle; near the Seven Mile Carr we had a glimpse of an otter watching for the roudding bream. Trivial things these, you may say; but they are of engrossing interest to the river-men of Broadland, to whom they serve as subjects of discourse in many a wherry's cabin and marshland inn. Also, they have served to remind the water-bailiff of events he had half forgotten; and since we returned to his snug little house boat he has entertained me with many reminiscences. He has told me of his struggle with a trapped otter which he tried to carry home alive; of a marshman's encounter with a winged heron; and a gamekeeper's adventure with a wily owl that came to rob his pheasant coops. Meantime he has been cutting a poacher's net into lengths which will serve to keep the birds off his garden beds.

Far into the night we sit talking together. Although summer is almost upon us we do not find the heat of a small fire burning at the bow end of the cabin too intense; for even in summer there are chilly nights and dawns in Broadland, and the mists often creep into one's cabin if care is not taken to keep them out. Our wooden walls are a sufficient barrier against this discomfort, but not too thick to prevent us hearing the songs of the night-singing birds and the lowing of the cattle on the meads. Now and again our cabin rocks a little, and we know that a wherry is passing up or down the river and setting a slight swell flooding up the quiet creek. It sets the reeds, too, in motion, and we hear them rustling for a minute; then they are silent again. For a little while my companion sits lost in thought, and I know that my questions have

reminded him of the early days of his life, when there were no Wild Birds Protection or Fish Preservation Acts, and he was able to shoot and fish almost whenever and wherever he chose. Presently he speaks again, to tell me of his first day's punt-gunning on Breydon; and this reminds him of some of the wonderful doings, in the direction of wild fowl capture, of the old-time Breydoners. To be moved to recount some of his



Burgh Church, on the Bure.

own adventures is the natural result of following this particular line of reminiscent thought, so I am not surprised when I find him recalling, with a gleeful appreciation delightful in a water-bailiff, some of his own fish-poaching escapades. Of many of these he is ready to speak fully, so far as they relate to the dodging of the river-detectives; but when they arouse a not unnatural curiosity concerning the methods of fish-poachers I have to rest content with a knowing smile. Telling you how you may find safe concealment not only for yourself but for

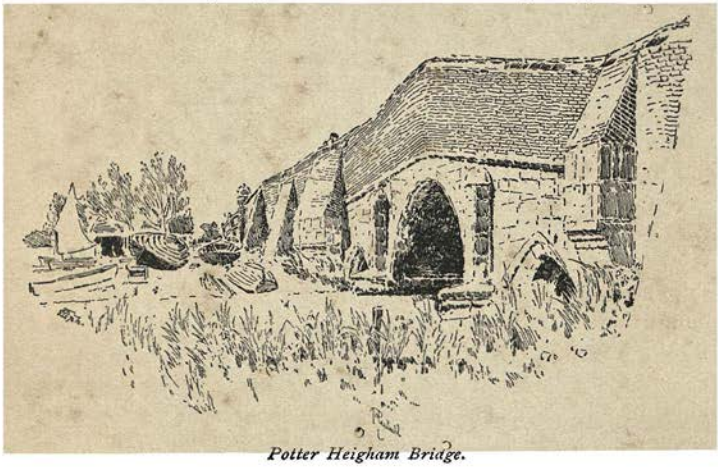
your boat under sheaves from a reed stack is one thing; letting you into the secrets of bream-netting and pike catching is another. "I'm a water-bailiff now, as you know," remarks the old man, with a roguish twinkle in his eye; "but the society which employs me has to rely on subscriptions to pay me, and who can say how long they will keep coming in? They don't amount to much at any time; and if they fall off altogether I may have to take to my old trade again." While I listen to the old man's reminiscences I am impressed by his account of the variety of employment a man could formerly find in Broadland. He, himself, has been in turn a fish-poacher, water-bailiff, reed-cutter, marsh-mower, eel-catcher, flight-shooter, smelt-fisher, yachtsman, and punt-gunner; and he is acquainted with broadsmen who, in addition to following most of these occupations, have also been peat-cutters, dyke-drawers, wherrymen, cattle-tenders, and millmen. As a lad of nine he helped his father at "smelting" on Breydon: his hands still bear the marks of their exposure to the icy water and bitter winds. Glad enough he was to arrive at an age when he could choose his own times for netting and shooting, and retire to his house-boat or marshland cottage when he pleased. All his life, however, he has been a kind of water-gipsy, and has seldom ventured far beyond the borders of Broadland. His wants have been so few that a little labour was enough to meet them, and since attaining to manhood he has always followed his inclinations in deciding how they shall be met. Away from the swirling of the rivers and the whispering of the reeds he can find no contentment; these sounds are essential to his happiness, and he grows restless and ill at ease if he cannot hear them. He confides to me that if he had the chance to begin his life again he would choose to pass his second spell of existence in much the same way as he has his first—an assertion which, in view of the fact that he has been an arrant fish-poacher, goes far to confirm my belief that much of the old leaven is still working within him. I cannot help think-

ing that somehow it has been given to this old broadsman to discover the secret of contentment: he seems to ponder over the incidents of his past days so lovingly and find such pleasure in recalling his little victories and adventures. Hearing him speak arouses a feeling that is almost envy: he is so sure of the advantages of being born in a marshland hamlet near the rivers and the coast that you feel the fates have not dealt fairly with you in withholding them from you. Libraries and museums seem small things when you hear an unlettered broadsman read the weather-signs of sea and sky and name a wakeful bird from its cry in the night; steamships are at a disadvantage when compared with wherries and gun-punts; they may enter estuaries, but cannot explore the quiet creeks of the upper reaches. Clearly, Broadland is the ideal place for a man to live in, and the broadsman's life the ideal one.

There is no church clock to strike at midnight, so we do not heed the swift flight of the hours. Lounging on the lockers, one on each side of the cabin, we chat from the dusk of a summer night to the dawn of a summer day. Not until the pale morning light begins to creep into the cabin do we try to sleep, and we are awake and abroad again before the night mists have wholly vanished from the marshes and the night-dews from the sallows and water-flags beside the creek. A little black-capped reed bunting twitters a morning greeting to us from the summit of a sallow branch. His presence reminds my companion of a morning when, on leaving his cabin, he found a squirrel frisking among the branches of that same sallow bush. It had, no doubt, come from one of the copses on the border of the marshes; but to reach the creek-side it must have crossed quite a mile and a half of treeless marshland—a strange journey for a squirrel to take. After a frugal breakfast, for which the kettle is boiled over a driftwood fire on the river-wall, the water-bailiff locks the door of his houseboat and we set sail in his gun-punt for Oulton Broad. On the

river our outlook is often confined by the high-banked "walls," so I amuse myself by identifying as many as possible of the waterside wild flowers. Some of the "ronds," as the marshmen call the stretches of swampy land between the water and the "walls," are dotted with yellow irises; here and there is a creamy cluster of fragrant meadow-sweet. Tall cat valerians are already overtopping the seeding sedges, but will soon be dwarfed by giant marsh thistles, which are often ten feet high. Countless swallows are skimming close to the surface of the water; round the tower of an old black windmill some swifts or "develins" are wheeling and screaming. Pausing for a moment near a creek-mouth, we get a glimpse of a party of haymakers, whose scythe-whetting we have heard sounding shrilly from beyond the river-wall. It is a summer sound—as much so, indeed, as the screaming of the swifts, the humming of the bees among the wild flowers, and the "reeling" of the grasshopper warblers amid the lush marsh grass. A queer crop the haymakers are cutting, for the marsh on which they are working is a rush marsh, and rushes, sedges, thistles, meadow-sweet, and orchises seem almost as plentiful there as grass. "No good for fodder; only fit for litter," is my companion's comment on the crop; and, having made it, resumes his voyage. At Oulton Broad there are signs that the yachting season has begun. Pleasure wherries, yachts, and launches are already starting or preparing to start on their inland cruising; on the lock-walls at Mutford Bridge are more yachtsmen than wherrymen, on the yachts more flirting than fishing. After bidding the old water-bailiff good-bye, I stay awhile watching the parties of pleasure-seekers setting out on their cruising. It is plain that they look forward to having a novel and delightful holiday, and I have little doubt that, weather permitting, they will be charmed with what they see in Broadland. But I doubt whether from the decks of their smart yachts and wherries they will be able to get such insight into Broadland life as I got last night in the broadsman's cramped little houseboat.

Some of the Broadland marshes are veritable wild-flower gardens, and many a floral treasure have I found while roaming the dykesides and swampy lands around the broads. I can recall the delight experienced when I first discovered the rare marsh sowthistle growing by a neglected dyke near—but I will not name the locality, though it is well known to an old Broadland botanist whom I used to meet in the course of my rambles. This same botanist was a queer character in his way. I first met him on a May day when he was collecting sedges near an



Potter Heigham Bridge.

alder copse on the bank of one of the broads. From a distance I took him to be a marshman, for he wore a broad-brimmed Tyrolean hat, such as the dyke-drawers often wear in all weathers. A few minutes after I came up to him he explained to me the difference between two varieties of tufted sedge. There were many species of sedge, he said, on the rush marshes; he had found half a dozen different kinds that morning. He believed he had found specimens of all the flowers native to his district, and not a few interesting aliens: now he was devoting his time to the compilation of a list of

the local grasses and sedges. When he had done so he would have completed a manuscript *Flora* of ten parishes; but he doubted whether any publisher would issue it at his own expense. "If he did," he remarked, "he'd sell perhaps fifty copies in as many years." His "frail," as he called the rush basket he carried, contained some frogbits and two or three kinds of water crowfoots; but though the marshes were in places pink with cuckoo-flowers and marsh valerian, or ruddy with red rattle, it was as yet too early for many of the choicest fen flowers. These often grow in the least accessible spots, for they are the survivors of the old-time fen flora, and are only found in tracts of unreclaimed swamp.

"I should like," said the old man, "to have known the Cambridgeshire Fens before the dykes and drains were dug and the pump-mills put up there. It is only in Norfolk, and here and there in Suffolk, that you find some flowers which were once abundant all over the Eastern Midland lowlands. Wicken Fen is the only tract of original fen left in Cambridgeshire; and a short time ago I saw a list of the plants to be found there. With a few exceptions they are also to be seen within five miles of where we are standing. On these rush marshes you may find the marsh pea, the bogbean, and five kinds of wild orchids; in the dykes, water soldiers, bladderworts, greater spearworts, water violets, and several rare kinds of pond weeds. The sundews will soon be coming up all over the bog-moss, and a little later the beautiful grass of Parnassus will be in bloom in that marsh where the pee-weeps are feeding.

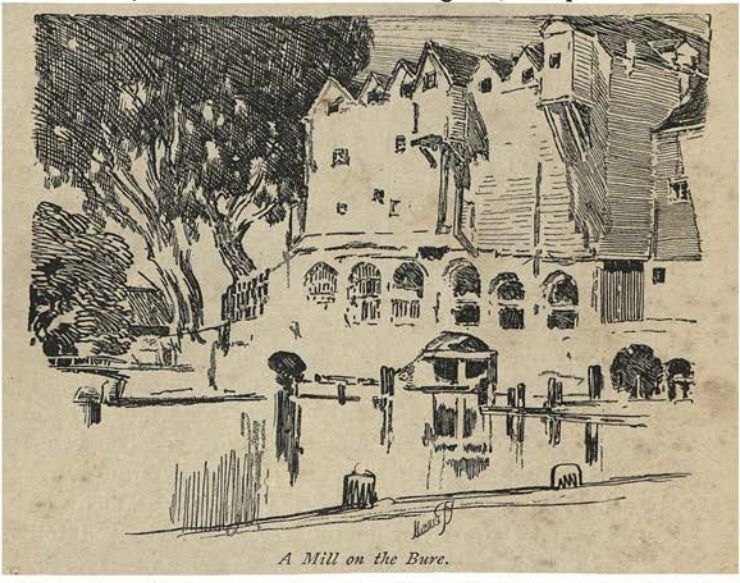
"I began botanising when I was at school. There were no handy *Floras*, no *Bentham* nor *Hooker* then, to help a young beginner. As a lad I lived near Lowestoft, and used to spend my holiday afternoons in spring and summer in rambling along the banks of Lake Lothing. It isn't much of a lake, and never was; but there were plenty of salt marsh flowers growing just beyond the mud flats. I paid a visit to my old

haunts not long ago; but many of the flowers I used to find there had disappeared. I could only find one spot where the sea southernwood and the sea pink were growing; the sea lavender, sea plantain, and sea beet were quite gone. Some of my friends think that a man who troubles himself so much as I do about wild flowers must be a little bit queer in his head; but I tell them that he is a lot better occupied in finding and classifying plants than in collecting birds or birds' eggs or sticking pins through butterflies and dragon-flies."

On a late summer evening I found myself on the crest of a steep wooded bank or "hanger" overlooking the Waveney Valley. Many centuries ago this bank formed part of a line of cliffs. From its summit I had an outlook of many miles across level marshlands, stretching away where once a vast estuary opened out towards the sea. Away in the west the ragged edges of a great cloud bank were all aflame with the glow of sunset; the river winding through the water-meadows showed a surface as of burnished brass. On the crest of the hanger were signs that summer was almost gone. Already a few withered leaves had fallen from the ashes and beeches, and others were rustling with a crispness of sound not heard in leafy June. Berries were reddening where a short time before were summer wild flowers. The bent-grasses had scattered all their pollen; the silky wind grass was bleaching because the sun had dried up the sap which was its life. Down by the riverside the reeds had attained full growth, and the swollen fruits of the cyperus sedge were crumbling from their drooping spikelets. The bird notes uttered in reed shoal, wood, and hedgerow were more intermittent than they had been a few weeks before.

From the summit of the slope I could see not only the level lowlands but the uplands, where the harvestmen had been at work all day in the corn. They had worked while daylight lasted; and if the moon had risen before the sun set they would have kept on loading their waggons an hour or two longer.

In the waning light they had worked between the rows of yellow sheaves, and their gruff "howd-yes," uttered whenever the horses were about to draw the waggons onward, were heard now faintly, then distinctly, as progress was made up and down the field. Presently there was a shriller warning cry, followed by a louder stamping of hoofs and rumbling of wheels, and a waggon had swung through a gateway on to the hard road, where branches of the hedgerow oaks plucked corn



A Mill on the Bure.

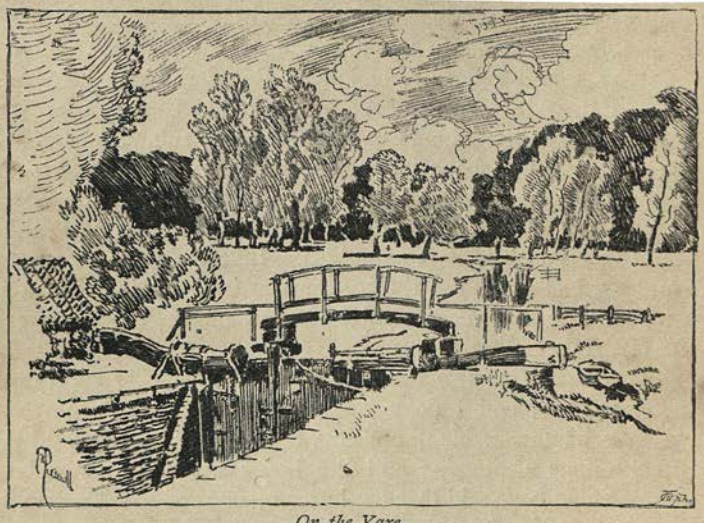
from the high-heaped sheaves. Then the harvestmen picked up their coats from a hedge bank, and left the field to a few belated birds among the stubble. The screaming swifts from a neighbouring church tower became restless in the gloaming —sometimes rising high in the air, then swooping low down over the corn sheaves,—while bats began flitting uncertainly above the hedges, chasing the white moths that were fluttering among the late-blooming wild flowers. The jingling

of a farm-horse's chain harness disturbed the rabbits in a warren near the hanger, and they scurried off to their burrows. With the changing note of the night-jar they were more familiar, and paid no heed to its weird "churring" among the trees.

As dusk deepened the river surface assumed the appearance of a breath-blown mirror, and a faint mist marked the courses of the dykes. Gradually the mist grew denser, until it wholly enshrouded the water-meadows. A slight breeze arose, but was only sufficient to make the mist what the marshmen call a "patchy roke," and scarcely stirred the dark-plumed reeds. Soon the wide marshland entirely vanished, and I could almost believe that the lowlands were again submerged—that the sea had won back its ancient bed. I listened for the lapping of waves against the foot of the slope; but the only sound that came up from mist-mantled marshes was the plaintive cry of a restless water-bird. Like the voice of some wanderer lost in the fog, the cry came at irregular intervals for a while; and then silence, unbroken and intense, brooded over the lowlands.

There are some two hundred miles of navigable waterway in Broadland, and I do not know one mile where, if the weather be favourable to cruising, the voyager should find his surroundings depressing and the hours weigh heavily upon him. Some have said that the lower reaches of the Yare and Bure, where the rivers flow through unrelieved levels of marshland, are wearisome and monotonous; but I have never found them so. If I can hear a redshank shrilly crying above its nesting ground, or a "plover piping o'er the fallow lea," I do not pine for the musical murmur of woodland brooks, or the voice of the reaper in the corn. Others have complained that Rockland is a dreary broad because it lacks the beauty of Wroxham and Barton and the woodland charm of Fritton Lake; but has not Rockland coots in its hovers, reed warblers to sing to you by night as well as day, and is there nothing in

the life of a broadsman whose home is a house-boat in a Rockland creek to provide food for reflection during the idle hours of a summer day? To my mind, half the delight of exploring the out-of-the-way nooks and corners of Broadland is to be found in meeting and talking with men whose lives have been spent on and around the broads and rivers. They are a vanishing race: like the old-time fenmen they find their occupation almost gone. Acts for the preserving of fish and



On the Yare.

protecting of wild birds have made it impossible for them to gain a livelihood in the ways their forefathers did. Still, there are eel-catchers on the Bure whose curious methods of eel capture are well worth investigating; and a winter day spent in the company of a Breydon punt-gunner is a day to be remembered. Then, too, there are the wherrymen whom you meet in the evenings at the marshland staithes and ferry inns. Approach them without displaying that ridiculous condescension which is characteristic of too many amateur yachtsmen, and

you will find them able and willing to impart much curious information concerning the river life and wild life of Broadland. For these men are not simply fair-weather voyagers: they are afloat on the rivers from January to December, and see the broads and marshes under all aspects and in all seasons. Many of them have known no other life than that which is spent in cruising between the East coast ports and the inland towns; but it has taught them many things of which the world that lies beyond the borders of the marshes has little knowledge.

Join a group of them some summer night when they are gathered in the low-ceiled bar-room of a riverside inn, or lounging about a lock or staithe in the midst of the marshes. Hear them talk of the voyages they have made when the "roke" was so dense as to hide even the windmills on the river banks; of the days when their wherries were icebound and the snow-drifts rose higher than the river-walls; of the marsh-fires which used to flicker over the festering swamps; and of the mist wraiths and phantom fishermen of the meres and marshes. Watch how their faces assume a fixed expression and their pipes are allowed to go out while some old man among them tells of a strange sight he saw one autumn night when his wherry was moored near the ruins of St. Benet's Abbey. "There wor a full mune, an' you could see th' mills an' mashes as clear as day. There worn't a breath of wind, not even enow to set th' reeds a-rustlin'; an' for over an hour arter sun-set you couldn't hear a livin' thing a-movin' either by th' river or on th' mashes. I wor a-settin' in my cabin along wi' my mate Jimmy Steggles (him as used to hev th' owd *Bittern*), an' we wor a-talkin' about one thing an' another for a while afore turnin' in for th' night. All of a suddent we heered th' quarest kind o' screechin' a man ever heerd, an' lookin' out o' th' cabin I seed a man a-runnin' towards th' wherry as hard as he could put foot to th' ground. He soon got alongside on us, and I axed him what he wor a-screechin' about. 'It worn't me, bor,'

he say; 'it wor suffin' what come outer th' shadder o' th' owd abbey. I wor a-goin' home to Ludham, arter lookin' arter some bullocks what are on a mash yonder, an' I thowt I heard suffin a-movin' about agin th' ruins. Thinks I, that must be one o' them there cows what wor browt down here from Acle yesterday forenoon. So I went outer my way a bit to see if anything wor amiss. When I got within about twenty yards o' th' walls suffin come a-wamblin' outer th' shadder o' th' owd mill,' (you know there wor a mill built on th' owd abbey years agone) 'an' started screechin' like a stuck pig. I never stopped to see what it wor, but jist come for yar wherry like hell in highlows!' He wor a chap I knew well—his father had an eel-sett up th' Thurne River—an' he wor a-tremblin' all over like a man wi' th' ayger. Both I an' my mate went ashore, an' I took my gun chance I'd wantin' it; but all we seed wor an owd harnsee (heron) go a-flappin' away acrost the mashes. An' it worn't a harnsee what made that screechin', I'll stake my life; though what it wor I never knowed. Whatever it wor it give that Ludham chap a funny fright, an' he wouldn't hear o' goin' home that night. So we had to find a berth for him aboard th' wherry, an' he went on to Wroxham Bridge wi' us in th' mornin."

This is the only ghost story I ever heard that was in any way connected with St. Benet's Abbey; but I often wonder that there are not many such tales associated with that lonesome ruined shrine. Maybe the desecrating hands which built a windmill on its walls robbed it of its sanctity, so that the marsh folk have forgotten that it was ever anything but a windmill. Yet there was a time when it was one of the wealthiest abbeys in England; and its abbots had a princely residence at Ludham, where they entertained courtly guests and even kings. So long ago as the days of the old East Anglian kings there was a hermitage on the Cowholm marshes, and when Canute, to atone for the blood he had shed in warring against the Saxons, determined to build an abbey there, he was

lavish of his wealth in its endowment. It is said to have been strongly fortified; that it "resembled a castle more than a cloister," and was rendered the more secure from attack by its situation in the midst of treacherous fens. At any rate, [illegible] Conqueror's troops came to take it they were unable until a monk, who bargained that he should be made for his treachery, revealed to them a secret path swamps. This done, the wretched monk received reward. He was made abbot of St. Benet's and ie same day. If any one's unrestful ghost haunts the ins on the Cowholm marshes it should be the wraith ionastic traitor.

iins of St. Benet's Abbey are worth stepping ashore you are cruising on the Bure; but they are not of extent or attractiveness to repay a journey to them. he monastic remains in Broadland are of very slight But at Bungay, a pleasant little town on the upper the Waveney and away from the regular tourist routes, iins of a castle which must at one time have been example of the almost impregnable fortresses the iilt when each in his barony assumed the rights of a ;. It was a stronghold of the famous Bigods, Earls k, and during the intestine broils of Stephen's reign :rongly fortified by Hugh Bigod that that boastful eported by Holinshed to have said:

' Were I in my Castle of Bungaye,
Upon the water of Waveney,
I would ne set a button by the King of Cocknaye."

: may believe a ballad-writer whose name has not vn to us, the boastful earl was mistaken, for we are

" When news was brought to London town
How Sir Bigod did jest and sing,
'Say you to Lord Hugh of Norfolk,'
Said Henry, our English King,

'Though you be in your Castle of Bungay,
Upon the river of Waveney,
I'll make you care for the King of Cockney!'

"King Henry he marshal'd his merry men all,
And through Suffolk they march'd with speed;
And they march'd to Lord Bigod's Castle wall,
And knocked at his gate, I rede;
'Sir Hugh of the Castle of Bungay,
Upon the river of Waveney,
Come doff your hat to the King of Cockney.'

"Sir Hughon Bigod, so stout and brave,
When he heard the King thus say,
He tumbled and shook like a May-mawther,
And he wish'd himself away:
'Were I out of my Castle of Bungay,
And beyond the river of Waveney,
I would ne care for the King of Cockney.'

"Sir Hugh took three score sacks of gold,
And flung them over the wall;
Says, 'Go your ways, in the Devil's name,
Yourself and your merry men all!
But leave me my Castle of Bungay,
Upon the river of Waveney,
And I'll pay my shot to the King of Cockney!'"

Bungay Castle is still a stout old ruin; and if it could not withstand the besieging of King Henry and his men, it still defies the ravages of time. But at the mouth of the Waveney, where the river mingles its waters with those of Breydon, is a far sturdier and more massive stronghold. It is called a castle; but it is no Norman building, like the castles of Norwich, Castle Rising, and Bungay. It is a Roman fortress, rivalling Richborough in preservation, and exceeding it in extent. Antiquaries tell us that it is the old Roman station *Gariononum*, built during the reign of Claudius by the proprætor Publius Ostorius Scapula, to guard the mouth of the ancient estuary of *Gariensis* and keep in check the warlike Iceni.

The last time I visited Burgh Castle I climbed to the summit

of one of its solid watch-towers, where there was nothing to cast a shadow so big as a man's hand, and the sun-rays had heated the flints till I could scarcely bear to touch them. I felt that it was good to be there, for the massive bastions of that wonderful ruin shut out the world of the present, and I could easily imagine that the ground they enclosed resounded again with the stamping of Roman horse and the clashing of Roman arms. I could see the signals which the watchmen flashed across the water to the camp at Caister, the scouts coming in from the woods where the Iceni lurked, and the galleys discharging their cohorts of armed men. I was in a settlement of ancient civilisation in the midst of a rude people who dwelt in log huts and caves in the earth. Trained legions were matching their skill against primitive recklessness and fearlessness, armed with the simple weapons of the chase. The outcome of the unequal contest was evident at a glance. The Iceni were vanquished; the walls of *Gariononum* were impregnable. So long as daylight lasted I lingered around the old fortress, and even when night came I was loth to leave it. One did not need to be an antiquary to appreciate a structure which had survived the passage of two thousand years, and near whose walls lay the dust of men who had walked the streets of Rome in the days of Claudius. When the shadows lurked under the bastions and the churn-owl came out of the woods to hawk for moths about the watch towers, the spell of the place grew upon me. *Gariononum* by night is much as it was in the days of the Romans. Darkness obliterates all indications of modern life seen in daytime on the lowlands, and the faint mist which rises from the river and drifts over the fortress walls might well be the breath of a legion sleeping on the scene of a hard-fought fight.

Writing of Burgh Castle reminds me that at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a camping ground at Burgh, where some notable matches were contested between teams representing different parishes, or hundreds. Camping was a

very popular game in East Anglia until the end of the eighteenth century; but it gradually went out of favour on account of its riskiness and the rough tactics practised by many of its players. I chatted one day with an old broadsman who was present at the last camping match played in the Eastern counties. The match took place in the early years of the nineteenth century, so he was quite a lad at the time; but he well remembered it, for his father was one of the players. The competing teams represented two Norfolk hundreds, and for some time hardly anything but the match was discussed in the neighbourhood in which it was to be decided. On the day fixed for the contest the farmers could get no work done by their labourers, who as soon as day dawned set out for the camping ground. Almost every one present was a violent partizan of one team or the other, so feeling ran high and little effort was made to keep it within reasonable bounds. Shortly after midday the twenty-four players—there were twelve on each side—entered the field, and in a few minutes the ball was started and the struggle began. Two hours elapsed before one of the teams obtained the required number of goals, and by that time quite half the players were incapable of further exertions. There were no rules to prevent what would now be considered rough play; striking, tripping, and grappling were allowed, and the game was frequently interrupted by personal encounters between players who lost their tempers. The old broadsman said he would never forget the sight, for he feared every moment that his father would be killed. Yet this rough contest was a mild affair compared with many of the earlier camping matches. In the middle of the eighteenth century there was a great match between Norfolk and Suffolk on Diss Common, each team consisting of three hundred men. Apparently the Norfolk men were very sure of victory, for when they came upon the field they tauntingly asked the Suffolk men whether they had brought their coffins with them; but after fourteen hours play (!) had transformed the ground into a battlefield, the Suffolk team

were declared the victors Such games were called "fighting camps," and it is not surprising that nine deaths resulted from the one in question within a fortnight, nor is it strange that such encounters eventually fell into disfavour. A century and a half ago, however, sports needed to be boisterous to be appreciated. Sir Robert Walpole organised campings for his guests at Houghton; another statesman, Windham, encouraged them at Felbrigg, affirming that the game "combined all athletic excellences, a successful combatant requiring to be a good boxer, runner, and wrestler." So long ago as 1472 it was one of the most popular pastimes in East Anglia. In that year a Swaffham rector devised a piece of land adjoining the churchyard for a camping ground. After camping fell into disfavour, Burgh Castle was for a time a favourite resort of local patrons of the ring, and several prize-fights took place not far from the castle walls. The place was well suited for such encounters, for if the police threatened to disturb a fight the pugilists need only cross the river and take all the boats with them and they were out of reach of the arm of the law.

But these disconnected notes on days and scenes in Broadland are becoming wearisome. They are but vagrom jottings and reminiscences, and I cannot hope that they will gain more than the reader's passing glance. He must look elsewhere for descriptions of the loveliness of Wroxham, the quiet charm of moonlight nights on Hickling Broad and Heigham Sounds, and the Broadland churches with their fine brasses and gorgeous rood screens. Nor can I tell him more about the prolific wild life of this delightful district—of the beautiful little bearded titmice, which are found nowhere else in England; of the haunts of the kingfisher and great crested grebe, and the colony of black-headed gulls at Hoveton. All these subjects have been often dealt with, and it were a hopeless task to attempt to add anything to previous writers' observations. This much, however, I will say. For botanist, bird-lover, and entomologist no district in England is more

interesting than Broadland, while for the ecclesiologist it provides fine old churches enough to occupy his attention for many weeks. If river-cruising be too slow a method of progression for some who come here, they will find almost every place of interest easily accessible to the cyclist. But, as I have said before, Broadland can only be fully appreciated by those who devote months, nay, years, to its exploration. Others must be content with more or less faint impressions of its beauties and delights.

I often think what a grand thing it would be for naturalists if Broadland were made a national preserve. In the United States the Government has put a stop to the destruction of the wild birds and beasts of that wonderful and beautiful Rocky Mountain region, the Yellowstone Park. As a consequence the Park's attractiveness has become an ensured characteristic. It is a place where naturalists and nature-lovers may see not only the birds, but elks, antelopes, buffaloes, and deer living the life that is natural to them. The district is a vast Zoological Gardens, only a Zoological Gardens where there is no confinement. In addition to the animals I have mentioned, there are, according to a recent writer, plenty of other wild creatures, "such as the coyote, the porcupine, and the woodchuck, many singing birds, and everywhere hawks, ospreys, and eagles. The air and waters are alive with animal life." The area of Broadland is insignificant compared with that of the Yellowstone Park; but it is visited by more species of birds than any other district in the British Isles, and a great number of species are continually resident within its borders. Every decade, however, some bird or other which for centuries has bred here is lost to the district—driven away by a ruthless persecution which the Wild Birds Protection Acts are apparently powerless to prevent. The booming of the bittern is no longer heard among the broads, or if by chance this strange sound startles some gunner who is abroad in early spring the bird is immediately sought out and shot. Spoon-

bills and avocets, ruffs and black terns have long abandoned their old nesting haunts. To these birds, and many other species which are harmless to crops, but fast becoming rare, every possible protection should be extended; even the appointment of Government keepers to prevent illegal shooting and nest-raiding ought not be too much to ask for.

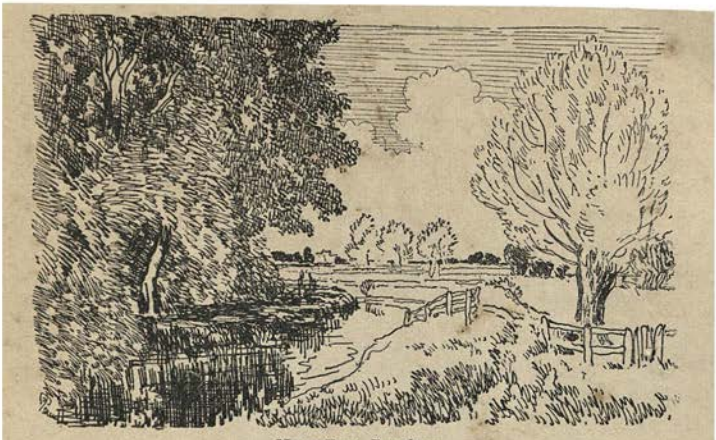
Of the Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire fens, Charles Kingsley wrote words which might, with little alteration, have been applied to Broadland. There, he said, "the coot

On the Bure.

clanked, and the bittern boomed, and the sedge-bird, not content with its own sweet song, mocked the notes of all the birds around; while high overhead hung, motionless, hawk beyond hawk, buzzard beyond buzzard, kite beyond kite, as far as eye could see. . .Wild fowl, screaming, piping, clacking, croaking, filled the air with the hoarse rattle of their wings, while clear above all sounded the wild whistle of the curlew and the trumpet note of the great wild swan." I know that unless the sea breaks through the marram banks and

transforms the lowlands of East Anglia in wild wastes of morass and reedy salt marsh, it is hopeless to expect to see again such abundant bird life in Broadland; but no one will deny that the district's charm and interest would be greatly enhanced if many of its birds which are now persecuted were afforded actual instead of simply legal protection. At Holkham the Earl of Leicester encourages the breeding of black-headed gulls and all kinds of wild fowl, and protects, so far as he can, the wild grey geese which come in winter to the North Norfolk coast; on his broad near Horning Mr. Christopher Davies carefully guards the mallards, shovellers, teal, and grebes. A riparian owner has even gone so far as to purchase several acres of boggy land covered with reeds, because they are a favourite haunt of the beautiful and exceedingly rare little bearded titmice. But although individual effort can do a good deal, much of its good work is neutralised by the outrages of inveterate law-breakers. These can only be put a stop to by an organised system of bird-defence. America is justly proud of its Yellowstone Park. Why should not England boast of its National Broadland Preserve?

Filby Broad.



Near East Dereham.

CHAPTER VI

EAST DEREHAM, "ARCADY," CASTLE ACRE, AND WYMONDHAM

ON a bright June morning, when there is breeze enough to temper the heat of the sun, the road from Norwich to Dereham is a delightful one to travel along. This is a fact the better to be appreciated if you have lately spent some days in the fine old city, and have grown tired of monastic crypts and cathedral cloisters. In this sweet June weather I would rather see a heron on the marshes than the most exquisitely wrought pelican in her piety on a stained window or ancient door lintel; and the deepening flush of poppies in the cornfields delights me more than a richly decorated roof or beautifully painted mediæval screen. As I am, like Dr. Syntax, in search of the picturesque, I must sometimes content myself finding it amid somewhat sombre surroundings; but I prefer to find it where the blackbirds pipe, the larks carol, the bees drone, and the wild roses bloom. So I have made up my mind to take a kind of circular tour in mid Norfolk, and explore some of the old country towns and quiet nooks in the heart of the county.

The Dereham road, when it escapes from the city, is a

good road for cycling—so good, indeed, that when I reach the gates of Costessey Park, and see a splendid stretch of wide level highway before me, I can hardly persuade myself to turn aside to the left for a while, and visit the little hamlet of Bawburgh. Yet Bawburgh, a hamlet in a hollow about a mile and a half from the main road, is a very ancient and interesting place, renowned as the birthplace of the farm-hand saint, St. Walstan; and I am told that if I descend into it, and enter a certain orchard near the church, I shall see St. Walstan's Well.

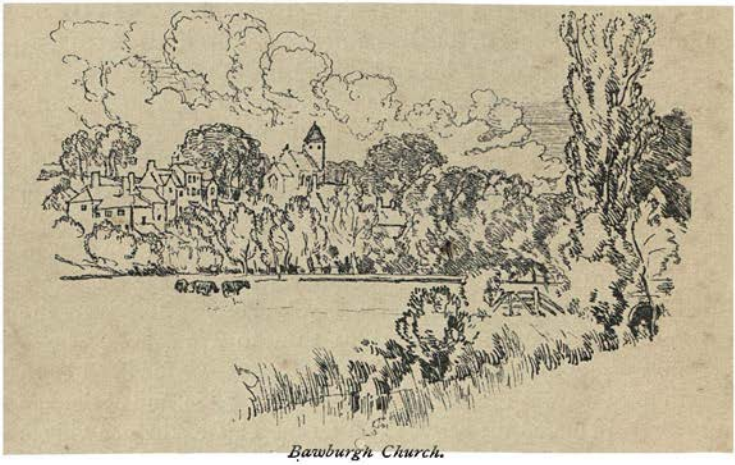
Bawburgh.

So, as the well was a far-famed resort of early pilgrims, I decide to seek it, and at the same time find out how much the present farm-hands of Bawburgh know of the story of the saintly hind who tilled the land around here in the days of the Norman kings. A narrow by-road, bordered by smooth-boled beeches, rugged elms, and silvery birches, leads down to the village, and the birds are so numerous in the adjoining copses and hedges, the mice and voles so active among last year's withered leaves, that the wild creatures seem to have it almost entirely to themselves. Even in the village itself there are few

signs of human life. The cottages, many of them very old and dilapidated, appear to be deserted; the conical cap on the round tower of St. Walstan's church shows a gaping cavity which speaks of neglect, and plainly proves that modern pilgrims leave few offerings at the ancient shrine.

A little girl who emerges unexpectedly from a lane near the church, has never heard of St. Walstan or his well: but a bent old labourer, whose dingy garb makes him almost indistinguishable from the grey wall against which he leans, knows where the well is, and directs me to a farm behind the church. Here I have no difficulty in finding it, for the farmer himself is in the barn and readily conducts me to his orchard, where, in the midst of a few gnarled apple trees, an old circular stone well, apparently only a few feet deep, and containing only a few inches of greenish water, is surrounded by a low wall of broken bricks. This, says the farmer, is St. Walstan's Well; and though there is so little water in it, the water rises so quickly from some hidden spring, that, in spite of all his efforts, he has never been able to "draw it dry." In Costessey Park, he goes on to tell me, there is a similar well; but it is "gone dry." He has forgotten the story of St Walstan; so I have to turn to Blomefield, who, I find, was compelled to go to Capgrave's *Legends* for it. I learn that Walstan was the son of Benedict and Blida, and at the age of twelve entered the service of a farmer at Taverham, a village not far from Bawburgh. There he displayed so charitable a disposition, giving his scanty food, and even the shoes off his feet, to the needy, that his mistress, who was a careful body, thought it her duty to remonstrate with him. When, however, she found him working barefoot among sharp thorns and broken stones, and yet apparently unhurt by them, she believed him to be under especial divine protection, and, instead of admonishing him, fell down on her knees before him. Then she went to her husband, who, on hearing of his servant's reputation for sanctity, wished to make him his heir; but this Walstan would not let him do, though he

accepted the offer of a calf of a certain cow when it calved. In due course the cow gave birth to two bull calves, which Walstan reared because an angel had appeared to him and told him they would conduct him to the place of his burial. The angel again appeared to him one day when, with other labourers, he was mowing in a meadow, and warned him that his death was near at hand; afterwards telling him the exact hour when he would die. This news the wonderful farm-hand received unmoved; and he kept on mowing until a short time before the



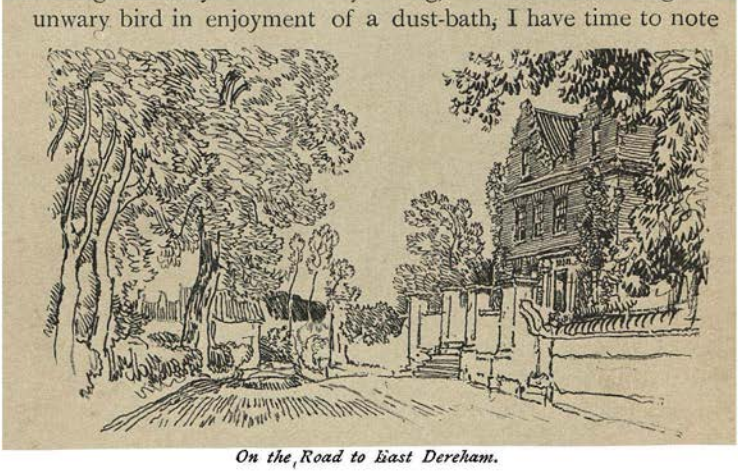
Bawburgh Church.

hour of his death. When the hour approached, he called his master and fellow-labourers together, and commanded that directly he died his body should be placed in a cart and his two oxen yoked to the cart and allowed to draw it wherever they pleased. Then, falling prostrate on the ground, he besought God to heal or aid every labourer who had any infirmity or whose cattle had distemper, providing he visited the final resting place of his (Walstan's) body. This prayer was answered immediately. A voice from Heaven was heard to say, "Oh, holy Walstan, that which you have asked is

granted. Come from your labour to rest." Walstan instantly expired, and as life left his body, a white dove issued from his mouth and soared into the sky. The labourers then lifted the body into a cart, and the oxen, left to go their own way, drew it to Costessey Wood, where the cart-wheels passed over the surface of a stream as though it were solid ground. On the crest of a hill in the wood the oxen paused, and a stream of water immediately issued from the earth. The well in Costessey Park marks the site of this miraculous fountain. Then the oxen went on to Bawburgh, where they again stopped, and another stream began to flow from the ground. It supplies St. Walstan's well to this day. Near this final stopping place, the body of the farm-hand saint was buried, and Bawburgh Church, dedicated to St. Mary and St. Walstan, was built over his tomb. Six chantry priests eventually came to minister at his shrine, which, with the wells, renowned for their many virtues, was visited by pilgrims from all parts of the country and even from beyond the sea.

In an earlier chapter I have told how, when Princess Mary fled to Kenninghall, Sir Henry Jerningham was one of the first men of rank to come with his retainers to her aid, and how he won by his daring action in respect to the warships at Yarmouth the greater part of the fleet over to her side. For these services he was made Vice-Chamberlain and Master of the Horse, and as a further proof of her gratitude the Queen bestowed upon him the fine manor of Costessey. This estate is still in the possession of the Jerningham family, and no one who passes along the Dereham road can doubt that it was, and is, a gift worthy of a queen. For some distance the road is bordered by Costessey Park; just now its woods are in the full beauty of their summer foliage, and I can hear the crooning of the doves, the tapping of the woodpeckers, the chattering of jackdaws, and the screeching of jays. Somewhere behind the roadside belt of woodland are two fine halls, one modern and magnificently decorated, the other a large Elizabethan house

in which is a room adorned with splendidly carved woodwork from the Abbey of St. Amand, at Rouen. There is a Gothic chapel, too, with windows filled with early German and Flemish stained glass; but these things are not for the edification of casual wayfarers along the Dereham road. For such there are the birds' songs, the crackling of bursting gorse-pods, the drooping brome grasses, and the June roses; and for my own part I am this morning quite content with them. Riding leisurely and silently along, sometimes startling an unwary bird in enjoyment of a dust-bath, I have time to note



On the Road to East Dereham.

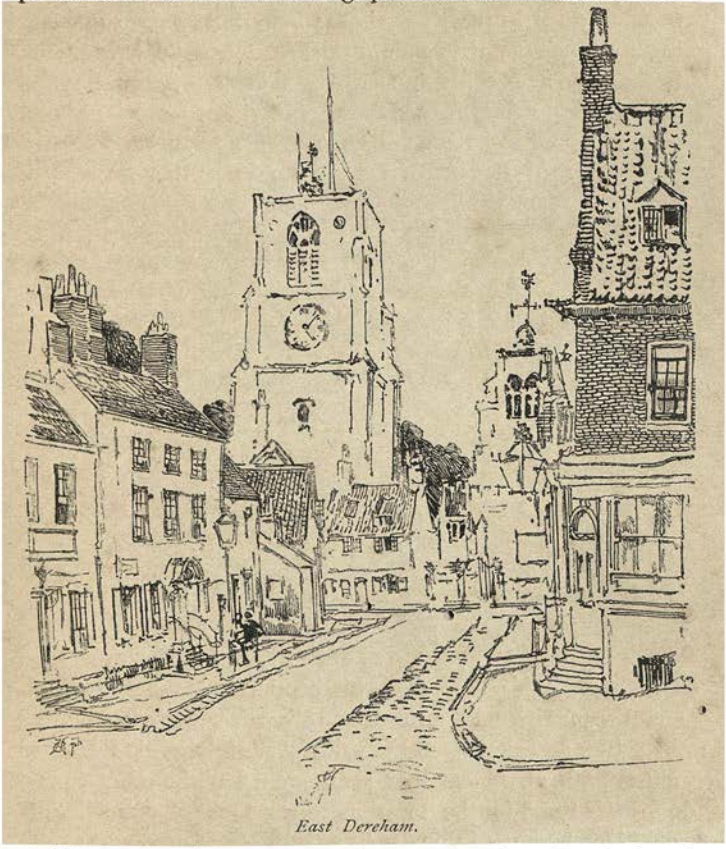
the fresh flowers which have bloomed since I first set out on my travels, the black bryony bines climbing the hedges, the butterflies fluttering and bees droning by the roadside. The gardens of the few cottages I pass are fragrant with old-fashioned flowers; the snug little farmsteads, standing a little way back from the road, with their thatched barns, yellow ricks, and red-wheeled waggons, are so suggestive of rural peace as to be left behind with a feeling of regret that I cannot see and know something more of them. One would like to have closer acquaintance with them; to follow the

farmer into the hayfield and his wife into the dairy, the milkman to the byre and pasture, and the horseman to the stables, and so get at the true meaning of a life spent so entirely apart from the busy ways of men. In the slumbrous little villages, too, where thatch is still used to roof the cottages, and the only unsightly buildings are the square little chapels with their superfluity of foundation stones, much might be learnt, if only one were not a stranger to their inhabitants. There are patriarchs sunning themselves in the cottage porches or tottering about the cottage gardens, who are old enough to remember the old coaching days—those days when there was romance and real adventure associated with travelling along these high roads and byroads. Have these old gaffers learnt the secret of contentment, or is it because circumstances were against them, that they did not, when they were young men, follow hundreds of their fellow villagers to the wider fields of the New World? With hands and chins supported on stout staffs they sit and gaze stolidly day after day down the same little-traversed stretches of road, or stoop stiffly to tie small strips of red flannel on their sons' and daughters' fruit bushes to scare the birds away; and their only complaint—if it be a complaint—is that times are not as they were. Every hamlet has its share of these rustic patriarchs, whom age has brought to a state of lethargic impassiveness. They usually wear a mask impenetrable to the passing wayfarer—a mask fashioned by scorching sun and winter wind. They embody a certain secretiveness characteristic of country life, a defiant reserve, born of diffidence and suspicion, and nurtured on silent broodings during years of hard and monotonous toil.

It is midday when I reach Dereham and approach the church, which, although, as Southey says, it is remarkable for its many evidences of antiquity, is chiefly famous for containing the ashes of the poet Cowper. That its foundation is of very ancient date is unquestionable, for it owes it to St. Withburga, a daughter of Anna, a seventh century king of the

East Angles. The story of this saintly maiden—or, rather, of her body after her death—is a strange one. She was King Anna's youngest daughter, and a sister of that St. Etheldreda who lived a holy life at Ely. In her youth her inclinations were all towards living a secluded life, and when she grew old enough she founded a nunnery at Dereham and became its abbess. When she died, in 654, her body was interred in the nunnery burial ground, which is now the churchyard, and there remained for many years. Then it was decided to remove it into the nunnery church, and the grave was accordingly opened. To the amazement of all concerned in the disinterment, the body showed no signs of corruption; and when it was conveyed into the church many miracles were wrought by it, so that the fame of the place and its sacred relic spread far and wide. For some three hundred years Dereham was a resort of pilgrims, who came to worship at St. Withburga's shrine. At the end of that time a certain abbot of Ely set his mind on getting possession of the body, so that he might bury it with that of St. Etheldreda in the abbey church at Ely, and thus attract to the latter shrine the pilgrims who yearly went to Dereham. But though King Edgar had given the manor of Dereham to the Ely monastery, the abbot knew that the townspeople would not willingly part with a relique which was not only sacred but a source of considerable profit to them; so he plotted with certain of his monks how the body might be stolen from its resting-place and secretly conveyed to the Isle of Ely. How the monks went to work I cannot say; but they managed to get possession of the body, and in the year 974 it was "translated to their abbey church and interred by the side of Etheldreda, Sexburga, and Ermenilda, Withburga's three sainted sisters." The people of Dereham were greatly incensed at the abbot's conduct; but as he was their spiritual father and the lord of the manor they were obliged to submit to his underhand proceedings. This they did with the better grace because of a wonderful thing which happened when the body was

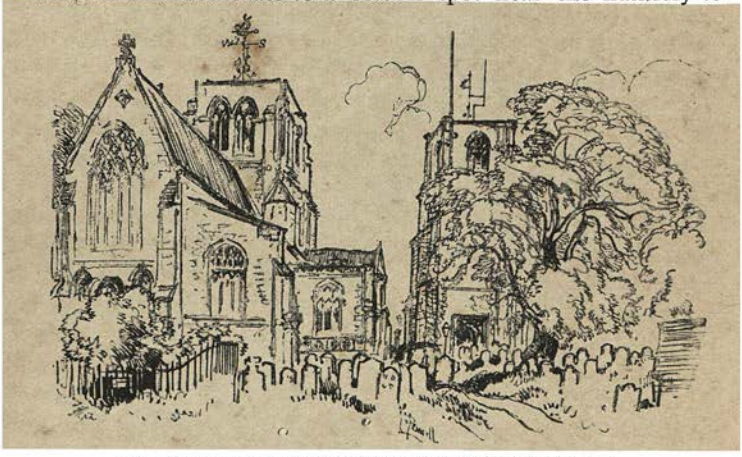
removed from the nunnery church. From the old grave in the churchyard a spring of water suddenly issued, and was found to possess such miraculous healing qualities that it went far towards



East Dereham.

making up to the townsmen the pecuniary loss they had sustained through being deprived of St. Withburga's body. If any one doubts the truth of this story let him go into Dereham churchyard, where he will see, carefully guarded by iron

railings and contained under an ancient arch, St. Withburga's Well, and over it this inscription:—"The ruins of a tomb which contained the remains of Withburga, youngest daughter of Anna, King of the East Angles, who died A.D. 654. The Abbot and Monks of Ely stole this precious relique and translated it to Ely Cathedral, where it was interred near her three royal sisters, A.D. 974." Another story of Withburga relates how she and her nuns were supplied with milk by two milch deer which came to a certain spot near the nunnery to



The Churchyard and St. Withburga's Well, East Dereham.

be milked. This they did with commendable but not unnatural regularity, until a townsman, "instigated by the Devil," took a bow and shot them both, an offence for which he was smitten with an illness that soon proved fatal. No one can doubt *this* story, for the town in which the deer were slain is called Dereham unto this day!

Nearly a century ago—to be precise, on July 5th, 1803—George Borrow was born in a little hamlet adjoining Dereham, called Dumpling Green. His father, a sturdy Cornishman, was captain and adjutant of the West Norfolk Militia; his mother the

daughter of a farmer of French Protestant descent, whose family had settled at Dumpling Green. As a lad, young Borrow, owing to the frequent movements of his father's regiment, seldom stayed long in any place; but he remained at Dereham long enough to get to look upon it as the chief home of his youth, and as such to love it. He considered it the pattern of an English country town, and never forgot the "dignified high-church clerk" whom twice every Sunday he heard repeat, with sonorous voice, the responses in Dereham Church. To-day I read the inscription on that old clerk's gravestone, and as soon afterwards as possible turn to my *Lavengro* and re-read his only memoir. "I have heard say that he blew a fife—for he was a musical as well as a Christian professor—a bold fife, to cheer the Guards and the brave Marines as they marched with measured step, obeying an insane command, up Bunker's heights, whilst the rifles of the sturdy Yankees were sending a leaden hail sharp and thick amidst the red-coated ranks; for Philoh had not always been a man of peace, nor an exhorter to turn the other cheek to the smiter, but had even arrived at the dignity of a halberd in his country's service before his six-foot form required rest, and the grey-haired veteran retired, after a long peregrination, to his native town, to enjoy ease and respectability on a pension of eighteenpence a day; and well did his fellow townsmen act when, to increase that ease and respectability, and with a thoughtful regard for the dignity of the good Church service, they made him clerk and precentor, —the man of the tall form and the audible voice, which sounded loud and clear as his own Bunker fife. Well, peace to thee, thou fine old chap, despiser of——"; but here I must stop quoting, for Borrow had strong antipathies, and this is no place for his full-blooded denunciations of papistry and dissent. Besides, I would rather look back over a few pages of his delightful autobiography, and see what he has to say about Cowper, whom he calls "England's sweetest and most pious bard."

East Dereham.

A large part of the latter years of Cowper's life, when chronic ill-health had made existence a misery to him, were

spent in Dereham, in a house, now vanished, which fronted the market-place, almost opposite where the statue of "Coke of Norfolk," once the idol of East Anglian agriculturists, looks down from its pedestal above the Corn Exchange. At times his friends the Johnsons would take him for a while to some quiet fishing village on the Norfolk coast, usually to Mundesley, where he would confine his rambles to the sea-shore, finding, as he said, "something inexpressibly soothing in the monotonous sound of the breakers." In the course of one of those rambles he came upon a lonely pillar of rock which the crumbling cliffs had left standing where its base was washed by every flood tide. He compared it to himself. "Torn from my natural connections," he wrote to Lady Hesketh, "I stand alone, and expect the storm that shall displace me." But it was at Dereham that the dark flood at last overcame him, not long after he had written his last poem, a pathetic little piece called *The Castaway*, in which he tells how one who had "waged with death a lasting strife" sank beneath the waves of a storm-swept sea. He compared the lost mariner's case with his own.

"I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give a melancholy theme
A more enduring date;
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

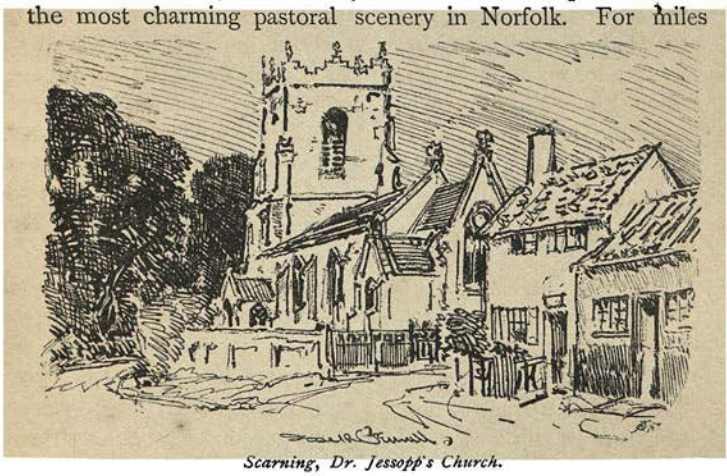
"No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed by deeper gulfs than he."

Just a century has elapsed since all of Cowper that was mortal was laid to rest in Dereham Church: the hundredth anniversary of his death was celebrated here about two months ago.

He had been dead some years when Borrow grew old enough to appreciate his works and sympathise with his hard lot; and it was not until many years had passed, and Borrow himself had drunk deeply of the cup of bitterness, that he wrote:—"Peace to the unhappy one, he is gone to his rest; the death-like face is no longer occasionally seen timidly and mournfully looking for a moment through the window-pane upon thy market-place, quiet and pretty D——; the hind in thy neighbourhood no longer at evening-fall views, and starts as he views, the dark lathy figure moving beneath the hazels and alders of shadowy lanes, or by the side of murmuring trout streams; and no longer at early dawn does the sexton of the old church reverently doff his hat as, supported by some kind friend, the death-stricken creature totters along the church path to that mouldering edifice with the low roof, enclosing a spring of sanitary waters, built and devoted to some saint—if the legend over the door be true—by the daughter of an East Anglian king."

Jackdaws and starlings are fluttering around the detached bell tower which was used as a jail for French prisoners of war on their way to Norman Cross. No doubt they are descendants of those which screeched and chattered while Philoh, the old clerk, uttered the responses in that sonorous voice which so impressed young Borrow, and Cowper tottered feebly up the churchyard path. Neither Cowper nor Philoh can hear them now; the one lies under the church's floor, the other under the graveyard's sod; and Borrow, too, though he outlived them for many years, is sleeping his last sleep, not in some quiet country churchyard, as would seem most fitting for one who loved the country so well; but where the roar of mighty London is heard night and day. Having lost these three, Dereham seems to have lost all the remarkable men it ever possessed. Cowper is remembered; Philoh is forgotten; and forgotten, too, might Borrow be for all that Dereham can show to prove he is not.

Between Dereham and Swaffham lies Dr. Jessopp's Arcady. It is a very pleasant district in which the scholarly rector, author, and antiquary lives; an ideal district for one who, while he loves his books and can always find contentment in his library, yet can enter whole-heartedly into the joys and sorrows of his parishioners, the imagined restoration of a ruined priory or Roman camp, and the opening of a barrow. From the churchyard at Scarning, and from the windows of the ivy-clad rectory, he can look out upon some of the most charming pastoral scenery in Norfolk. For miles



Scarning, Dr. Jessopp's Church.

there stretches away an unbroken vista of corn-fields and pasture-lands, watered by rush-fringed streams whose names are given in no guide-map and whose beds are almost choked with water-weeds. Sparsely scattered over this pleasant plain are isolated cottages and farmsteads—the homes in which the shepherd of this East Anglian Arcady heard those stories, humorous and pathetic, which he has recounted, with feeling comment, in all their rustic *naïveté*. Providing you are not "hurrisome," he says, "you may get most things out of your Arcadian friends—except money;" and as he has never had to

hurry—an advantage he possesses over the unfortunate and maligned tourist—he has acquired a vast amount of curious information. It was in one of these humble rustic homes that old Biddy Wiffin informed him, with an emphasis which betokened a fear of contradiction, that during all her years of "service" she had never had a mistress "as ever give" her flogging; and in another that old Joe Bickers explained that though he would not deny he was given to swearing, he meant no harm by it. "I didn't mean 'em *all* to be damned, as you may say, but somehow it kind o' came handy like, whereby you was helped along when you was in want of a word and couldn't stop noways." If I were a stranger in East Anglia I should be glad to bring Dr. Jessopp's *Arcady* here with me, as a companion volume to a guide-book; for his pictures of rural life afford much insight into the minds of the silent, unlettered country folk. In *Arcady* he has done for Mid-Norfolk what the author of *Idylls of a Moorland Parish* has done for Yorkshire—given us such realistic descriptions of present-day life here as are obtainable by those only who labour for the spiritual as well as the material benefit of men.

I am wondering to-day, as I ride through Scarning, whether a belief in witchcraft still survives among these peasants' homes of Arcady. Dr. Jessopp, in the course of his conversations with the Norfolk villagers, was often surprised to hear remarks made concerning the efficacy of charms, and the supernatural significance of encounters with certain animate and inanimate things; and as his experiences are of comparatively recent date it seems scarcely likely that all the old superstitions have entirely died out. His researches into Arcadian witchcraft taught him that the best way to get information on the subject is to approach the county coroners, whose reminiscences are often of exceptional interest and value. As an instance of this he quotes the case of the late Mr. Charles Wright, of Dereham, who was coroner of the Duchy of Lancaster (in Norfolk). This gentleman, in pursuance of his official duties, had to

inquire into the death of a woman who had lived in an out-of-the-way Norfolk village. On going, in company with the jury, to view the body, he was surprised to see a thin cord, with a small canvas bag attached, tied round the dead woman's neck. He asked the husband what the bag contained. "Them's her charms," was the reply; and on making further inquiries he learnt that the husband had, a year or two before his wife's death, consulted a "cunning man," whose name he mentioned, who had, among the labouring class of the district, a wide reputation for bringing about the recovery of ailing folk. Having ascertained the nature of the woman's ailment, this rural charlatan turned to his books, the number and size of which greatly impressed his consulter. He then wrote one of the charms contained in the little bag, and this charm the woman believed did her a "deal of good." But the improvement in her health, whether real or imaginary, was not maintained; and a few weeks before her death the "cunning man" was again consulted, and three-and-sixpence paid for a fresh charm. This, the husband was informed, must be placed with the other in the little bag, which must never be removed from the patient's neck, or dire results would ensue. In spite of the charms and the careful carrying-out of the "cunning man's" instructions the woman died; but this did not shake the husband's faith in the charlatan. "Naw daywt," he said, "but that there cunnin' man he kep her alive as long as a cewd; I ain't a-goin' to say he didn't, I ain't findin' no fault with him, cause her time was come!"

This, as Dr. Jessopp clearly proves, is no isolated instance of nineteenth century Norfolk superstition. Mothers firmly believed that certain evilly disposed persons were capable of inflicting injury upon children by "ill-wishing" them. A horse fell down while its owner was stealing an apple from the garden of a reputed witch, and the thief rushed into the old woman's presence and begged her not to "*hit* him any more." In 1883 there died a man who, with two others, had ducked an old

woman in a pond because she kept a black cat and wore a black silk dress on Sundays—facts quite sufficient to make her a witch in the eyes of her rustic neighbours. The three men—they were brothers and, it must be admitted, had just left an alehouse—went to the old dame's house one night, roused her from her bed, and, in spite of her entreaties, and "actually in the presence of half a dozen other people who . . . had gathered to see the sport, threw her into a hole, where she would infallibly have been drowned, but that some who were not so mad as the rest cried out that she was sinking to the bottom and must be saved." A young man who believed he had been "overlooked" by a witch, and who knew that the only cure for his consequent ill-health was to shed the witch's blood, fell upon the woman in question and scratched her arms so furiously that the blood poured down them. This happened in the sixties; but in 1882, when Dr. Jessopp referred to the incident in the *Nineteenth Century*, the scratcher was alive and master of an elementary school. Even more recently a farmer beat the wife of one of his labourers with a hedge stake because her evil eye had caused a "falling-off" in the condition of his lambs. As for the case of the reverend reprobate whom Dr. Jessopp calls Parson Chowne, it is almost too amazing to be credited; yet in 1882 there were people alive who had witnessed the extraordinary ordeal to which he subjected his servants. Parson Chowne missed a cash box containing a large sum of money. Furious at his loss, but unable by threats or violence to extort from any one a confession of guilt, he determined to work upon the feelings of the members of his household through the medium of their superstitious belief in the terrors of the unseen world. He ordered every man, woman, and child in his employ into his bedroom, and ranged them along its walls. From the centre of the ceiling hung a rope which for years had been used to lower coffins into graves. This rope was wound round a Bible, from amid the leaves of which projected the church door key.

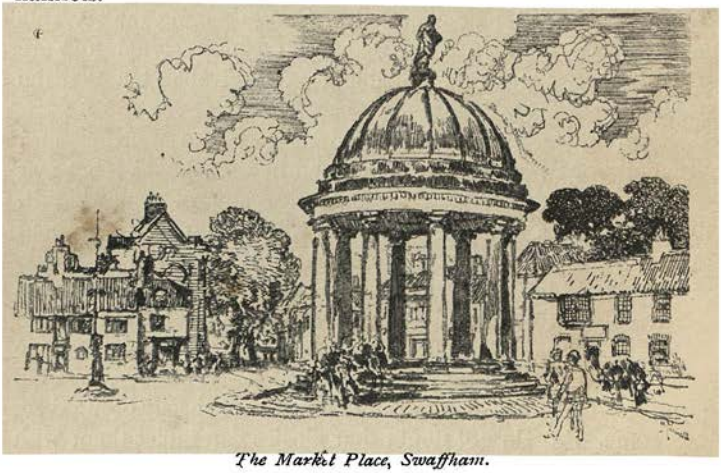
Having twisted the rope round and round till it would twist no more, the parson suddenly released it, so that Bible and key went spinning round like a top. He then explained to the trembling rustics that the "powers unseen" would so order it that when the Bible stopped spinning the key would point towards the thief. Breathlessly the servants gazed upon the twirling rope, which seemed as though it were "never going to stop." When at last it did stop, the key pointed towards a certain Jerry Chawler, who, fortunately for himself, was able to prove an *alibi*. The conclusion arrived at among the servants was, says Dr. Jessopp, "not that the means resorted to were not absolutely the best possible or conceivable, but that the thief was not there."

Belief in the supernatural wisdom of "wise women" and "cunning men" is not yet quite dead in East Anglia; but fear of exciting ridicule makes the rustics shy of admitting it. There are even now fishermen who will not go to sea without a child's caul tied round their necks. Within the last decade I have heard of fishing-boat owners consulting fortune-tellers as to the luck that would attend their year's or season's fishing. The horseshoe still hangs over almost every stable door in East Anglia; and if no yokel shakes in his shoes when an old gipsy woman glares at him from beneath her shaggy brows there are some who do not doubt that gipsies can inflict them with objectionable parasites. In isolated Suffolk hamlets charm verses are still muttered over burned or cut fingers and bruised limbs. If a burn requires healing the cure is a simple one. All you have to say, or get some one to say, is—

> "There came two angels out of the East,
> One brought fire and one brought frost.
> Out, fire! in, frost!
> In the name of the heavenly host."

These lines must be repeated three times to make the cure absolutely certain. Cuts and bruises require the charm verses to

be repeated at intervals of one or more days, so it is not difficult to understand how it is they are considered an almost infallible cure. The atmosphere of East Anglia seems to favour the survival of these old beliefs, which, like many of the old women's "rockstaffs," must have been introduced into the country by the Norsemen and Danes, who ravaged the coast, settled down upon it, and have left their mark in curious colloquialisms of speech and the names of families and hamlets.



The Market Place, Swaffham.

A couple of hours' easy riding takes me past the fine old hall at Necton and into sleepy Swaffham, a small town, picturesque enough in its way, but with no particularly striking buildings or interesting associations. Every one in this neighbourhood, however, is familiar with the folk-tale of the tinker who was said to have built Swaffham church. This tinker's name was John Chapman; and he dreamt that if he went to London and took his stand on London Bridge, a man would come to him and tell him some good news. Such a dream was not to be ignored; and before many days had elapsed, the tinker was

patiently strolling to and fro on London Bridge. There he got into conversation with a shopkeeper, telling him that he feared he had come on a fool's errand, having acted upon a dream. "Alas! good friend," said the shopkeeper, "should I have heeded dreams, I might have proved myself as very a fool as thou hast; for 'tis not long since that I dreamt that, at a place called Swaffham Market, in Norfolk, dwells one John Chapman, a pedlar, who hath a tree in his back garden, under which is buried a pot of money. Now, therefore, if I should have made a journey thither to dig for such hidden treasure, judge yourself whether I should not have been counted a fool." The tinker agreed that this would have been a fair judgment, and added that as for himself he would now return home to resume his business, "not heeding such dreams henceward." As soon as he reached Swaffham, however, he began to dig under the tree in his garden, where he soon found a pot full of money. Nor was this all. On the lid of the pot was a Latin inscription, a rough interpretation of which was to the effect that—

> "Under me doth lie
> Another much richer than I."

So the tinker continued digging, and discovered another pot containing twice as much money as the first. As a thank-offering for this good fortune John Chapman built the north aisle and tower of Swaffham church, where there was for many years a small statue of the tinker with his pack on his back.

I ride through Swaffham without dismounting, for I am anxious to get on to Castle Acre, a centre of archæological interest in Norfolk. The road to the village is somewhat dreary; the fields which border it look as though they are only half reclaimed from the heathlands, or slowly relapsing into their original barrenness. Dust lies deep on the road, and the hedges are smothered with it. Although it is early summer, and the rest of the country has burst into luxuriant leafage, this chalky land lacks colour and vegetation. Even the birds seem to shun

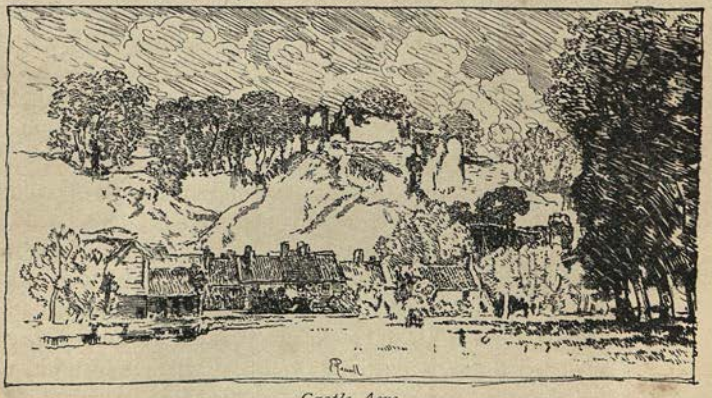
Church Tower, Swaffham.

it, except for a few whinchats amid the furze and sad-voiced plovers on the heaths. But the dreariness of the road is for-

gotten when Castle Acre comes in sight, clinging to the side of a steepish slope leading down to the little river Nar. The obvious antiquity of the village would in itself distinguish it from most of the Norfolk hamlets, ancient as many of them are; but when you approach near to it, and see that the greater part of it stands within a vast Roman camp; that the ruins of what must have been one of the largest castles in East Anglia overlook it from the summit and midst of huge earthworks; that a massive Norman gateway, which once gave access to the castle, spans the village street; and that down in the valley of the Nar, only a few hundred yards from the castle, are the ruins of a priory which ranked second to Walsingham only among the many monastic houses of Norfolk, you recognise that you have reached one of the Meccas of your pilgrimage. For here are relics of almost every race which has inhabited Eastern England since the days of the troglodytic Eskurian.

The castle ruins consist of little more than massive fragments which time has worn into a strange shapelessness, without architectural interest; yet their position, extent, and solidity make them wonderfully impressive. Raised on a great artificial mound and flanked by other ancient earthworks, sharp-backed ridges topped by massive walls, and yawning *fossæ* littered with fallen masonry, the remains of its circular keep remind one of an elevated Stonehenge. Old as it is, its surroundings are far older. The vast enclosure in which it stands, and which embraces the greater part of the village, is a Roman camp; the mound itself and its flanking earthworks date from long before the days of either Norman or Roman builders. The "Peddar's Way," a Roman road which runs from Thetford through Swafham and Castle Acre to the coast at Brancaster (where was the stronghold of the Count of the Saxon Shore), no doubt follows the course of some Icenic trackway. The ancient British settlements to which it led were occupied and extended by the Romans, whose work, in turn, provided foundations and building stones for the castles of the Norman

barons; so it is not surprising that flint weapons of the Stone Age and coins of Vespasian and Constantine have been unearthed in the midst of the Norman ramparts. In granting to William de Warrenne the manor of Castle Acre, the Conqueror bestowed upon him one of the most ancient settlements in East Anglia; and the Earl of Leicester, who is now lord of the manor, possesses a property of almost unique antiquarian interest. Its present holder inherits it through his ancestor, Sir Edward Coke, who, according to his biographer, Lord Campbell, obtained possession of it in a rather curious way. He



Castle Acre.

was a very wealthy man, who purchased so much land, especially in Norfolk, that the Crown is said to have made representations to him that he was creating an injurious monopoly. So he agreed to rest content if leave were granted him to purchase one more "acre." This the Crown had no objection to, and Sir Edward bought the great Castle Acre estate, which in itself was as large as all the rest of his lands together.

It is strange that a place of such great antiquarian importance should possess so little historical interest, yet I cannot find that there is one stirring event connected with the history of either Castle Acre castle or priory. Both owe their foundation to

the Earl of Warrenne; but from the time when they were built until their human occupants deserted them nothing seems to have occurred in connection with them that was worth recording. The stress of internecine war seems to have left them unstirred, the invader to have passed them by; they went their own way to ruin and desolation. Maybe the barrenness of the land around them had something to do with this; for though in the days of Toche or Toka, the thegn who owned Castle Acre at the time of the Conquest, the district is said to have been fertile and well wooded, its present aspect suggests that many centuries have elapsed since it could bear out the old chronicler's assertion. True it is cultivated, after a fashion; but the woods are gone, and there is little richness in the pastures of the Vale of the Nar. The village itself looks poverty-stricken, the soil unfruitful, or, like that of the Icenic mounds, productive only of wild roses, blackthorns, and brambles. Thistles and nettles, with here and there a tall downy-leaved mullein, are a poor crop to show for centuries of cultivation. Or, maybe, the land is exhausted by the demands made upon it by many generations of settlers. Under the frown of the grim castle walls, tenanted only by bats and sand lizards, trees and grass seemed to have withered; though it is early summer they might, to all appearance, have been subjected to midsummer heat and drought. True, there is a streak of fresh green where the river winds through the water-meadows; but it only emphasises the sterility of the higher lands. These seem parched and age-worn, and as the sun sinks behind the grey old priory they grow bleak and sombre, like the surface of a dying planet. The farm-hands, returning from their labour on the land, move shadow-like along the faintly-traced field paths, and emerge silently on to the dusty highway, like wild creatures of the woods and heathlands straying for a while beyond their accustomed bounds. An oppressive silence reigns everywhere; even from the village street comes scarcely a sound which betokens human life there.

Descending from the castle mound I enter the village and climb the steep street which squeezes itself under the old stone gateway. On either side the houses testify to the truth of the statement that they are built of stones and masonry from the castle and priory ruins. At one time it was feared that both these grand old works of the Norman earl would be demolished —carted away piecemeal; but the combined efforts of the Earl of Leicester and the Norfolk archæologists have put a stop to

Castle Acre Priory.

rustic vandalism. If, at the same time, the archæologists had taken charge of the whole village, it would not have been surprising; for grim gargoyles and curiously carved stonework are firmly built into, yet strangely out of place in, the walls of many of the houses; while ancient British, Roman, and Norman work is almost as much in evidence as that of the modern builder. As I pass near the church, on my way to the priory, I see crumbling masonry—portions, no doubt, of ancient

boundary walls – in all sorts of unexpected places; here half hidden by the brambles of a roadside hedge, there forming part of a cottage, and again supporting a fowl-house or cartshed. These relics of old Castle Acre are most numerous near the priory, but are too fragmentary to excite much interest after one has passed under the flint and brick gatehouse—a comparatively modern building, for it dates only from Henry the Seventh's time—and become acquainted with the beauty and impressive proportions of the ruined shrine. For, much as it has suffered at desecrating hands, Castle Acre priory is still by far the finest ruin in Norfolk, if not in all East Anglia; and to see the beautiful Norman façade of its west front is to be rewarded for many weary hours of journeying. Of late years some care has been taken to preserve the ruin, so that, although much of its grand work has vanished, it is still possible, and an interesting task, to trace out not only the ground-plan of the church but the monks' calefactory, chapter house, necessarium, and other portions of the old monastery. Even now the ruins are not wholly uninhabitable. An ancient caretaker lives in the western portion and his donkey gazes dejectedly out of a perpendicular doorway. A small collection of curiosities found in and around the priory are preserved in the abbot's chamber; on the ground floor some stone coffins which have been unearthed indicate that the ashes of the old monks have not been allowed to rest undisturbed.

In the twilight this grand old ruin, in which "Desolation holds her dreary court," assumes an aspect calculated to inspire melancholy musings; and while I pass under the hoary arches and wander down the grass-grown aisles and around the grey old walls I cannot but think of how—

> "Where now the bats their wavering wings extend,
> Soon as the gloaming spreads her waning shade,
> The choir did oft their mingling vespers blend,
> Or matin orisons to Mary paid.

Years rolled on years; to ages, ages yield;
Abbots to abbots, in a line, succeed;
Religion's charter their protecting shield,
Till royal sacrilege their doom decreed."

So, undisturbed except when the lame old caretaker with his clinking keys goes hobbling by, I linger amid the ruins until night comes on and the shadows grow so deep under the walls that the bats when they flit down into the roofless nave are lost in them, and the moths which the bats are chasing dart unseen against me. It is only when a pale mist rises from the river and steals into every nook and corner of the shrine, drenching the long grass till it exhales a dank odour, and causing the ivy leaves to shed showers of chilly mist drops, that I recross the priory mead and pass out on to the road again. By this time it is too dark to look into the village church and at the wonderful tabernacle work of that ancient font which came from the priory church, so I leave Castle Acre and make my way back to Swaffham by the light of the stars.

Early next morning, after a pleasant ride across the Pickenham warrens and a brief visit to Cressingham manor house, I enter Watton. Nothing tempts me to dismount here, so I continue my journey along the Wymondham road, and a little way out of Watton pass through Wayland, a hamlet which, according to local tradition, was the scene of the tragedy recorded in that once popular ballad *The Babes in the Wood, or the Norfolk Gentleman's Last Will and Testament.* The father of those ill-fated babes was a Norfolk man, who, when he was dying, confided them to the care of their "wicked uncle." How the uncle abused his trust is well known to all of us who have not forgotten the story which used to appeal so much to our youthful imaginations. When he had bribed the two ruffians to take the children into a wood and there kill

them, it was, we are told in Norfolk, to Wayland or Wailing Wood, that they brought them. Here one of the ruffians proved to have some tenderness left in his heart, and refused to actually murder the babes, though he quarrelled with and slew his companion and left the children to wander in the wood. As the old ballad says,—

" These prettye babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and downe;
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the towne:
Their prettye lippes with black-berries
Were all besmeared and dyed:
And when they sawe the darksome night,
They sat them downe and cryed.

" Thus wandered these poor innocents
Till death did end their grief;
In one another's arms they dyed,
As wanting due relief;
No burial this prettye pair
Of any man receives,
Till Robin-red-breast piously
Did cover them with leaves."

Of course, the wicked uncle was haunted by the memory of his crime, or the ballad would never have found favour in the days when every one looked for poetic justice in such cases. His barns were fired, his lands made barren, his cattle died, his two sons were drowned while on a voyage to Portugal, and in the end he came to beggary and misery, and died in jail. As for the babes, they still wander in Wayland Wood, and on dark and stormy nights you may hear their wailing, which has earned for the wood its local name. Even now I hear strange sounds, half laugh, half cry; and if it were night, I might assure myself that they confirmed the old villagers' stories; but daylight makes it impossible to mistake the origin of the cries. They are uttered by the "laughing gulls" of Scoulton, many of which are feeding in or wheeling over the fields on either side

of the road. As I approach the belt of trees which screens Scoulton Mere from the highway the cries grow almost deafening, for this lovely little mere is one and by far the most famous of the few English breeding-places of the black-headed gulls. In this "gullery" the birds are protected; but their first clutches of eggs are usually collected and sold—as plovers' eggs—as many as 20,000 being sometimes taken in a single spring. Fifty years ago even greater numbers were collected, the yearly "take" ranging from 30,000 to 44,000 in a season. But it may be that half a century ago the keepers collected the second as well as the first clutches, a thing they are not now permitted to do. The Scoulton farmers, and those of the neighbouring parishes, do their best to protect the gulls, which follow the plough like rooks and consume immense quantities of destructive grubs.

It is nearly three months since the gulls returned to Scoulton from the mud-flats of Breydon, the lonesome seashores, and, maybe, some of them from the Thames at Blackfriars, where their graceful flight was daily admired by the Temple lawyers and Fleet-street printers. In March the first of them came; and in a few days the waters of the mere were white with them, and the air was filled with their clamorous cries. Then their heads, which are never black but brown in summer, had their white winter caps on; but all through April, while they were busy nest-building on the islets of the mere, their crests gradually darkened, until now they are a beautiful chocolate brown. At times, when some unfamiliar sound alarms them, or a human intruder approaches the shores of the mere, they rise in a mass from the water, and their number is so great that they hide the trees behind them; but it is when they are wheeling above the fields or marshes, or hawking tern-like above a reed bed, and their white wings gleam against the clear blue sky, that they best repay watching, for then they are as beautiful a sight as man can wish to see. So I see them this morning; and it is not until I have put some miles between myself and Scoulton Mere

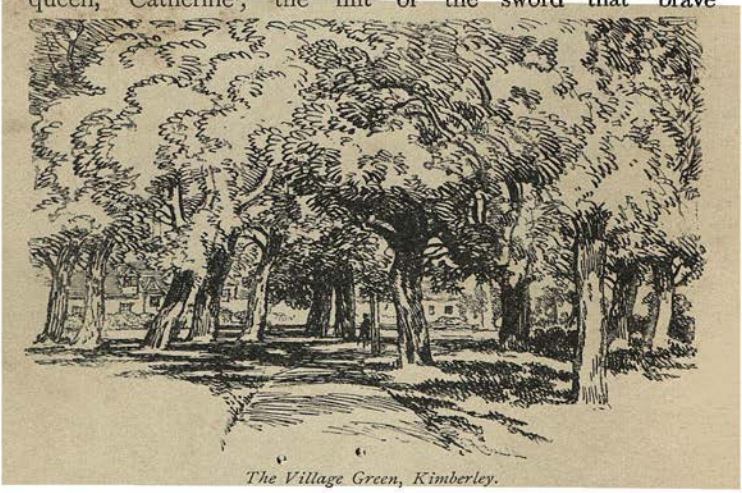
that I look in vain for them wheeling above me or feeding in the roadside fields.

From Scoulton I ride through quiet Hingham, keeping to the high road to Norwich until I reach the village green and church of Kimberley, noting on my way the curious fact that both Hingham and Kimberley have given their names to important towns over sea, the one in New England, the other in that newer England which we look to to complete the enlightenment of a great part of what was once called the

Kimberley Hall.

Dark Continent. Before taking the road to the right of the church, which will lead me into Wymondham, I turn into the churchyard, where, in a vault which is visible through an iron grating, lie many generations of Wodehouses, a family which, since John Wodehouse fought at Agincourt and was granted the right to inscribe the name of the battle on his coat of arms, has been closely associated with East Anglia, and now has for its head the Earl of Kimberley. Riding along the border of Kimberley Park, I soon arrive within the bounds of Wymondham, but have still a mile or two to travel before I

reach the double-towered church of that quiet little town. Meantime I get glimpses, through the vistas of Kimberley woods, of the hall of the Wodehouses, built in Queen Anne's time to replace a fine old manor house dating from the fifteenth century, and which had arisen on the site of an early home of the famous Fastolffs. The present house contains many treasured heirlooms. Here is a gold and coral rosary given to Sir John Wodehouse by King Henry the Fifth's queen, Catherine; the hilt of the sword that brave

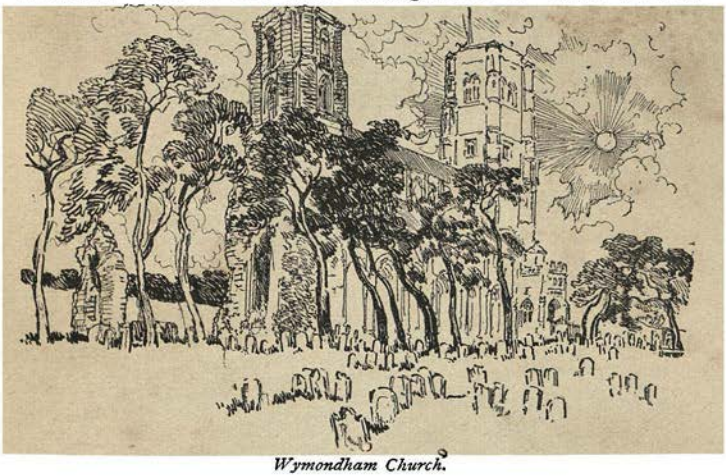


The Village Green, Kimberley.

knight wielded at Agincourt; a brocade worn by Queen Elizabeth when she stayed here in 1578; and a splendid portrait of Vandyck by himself. Almost as much prized as these heirlooms by its possessor must be that fine oak carr, with its gnarled old woodland monarchs, which borders the lake in the park, for it is one of the finest in the county and its sturdiness typical of the men who planted and preserved it.

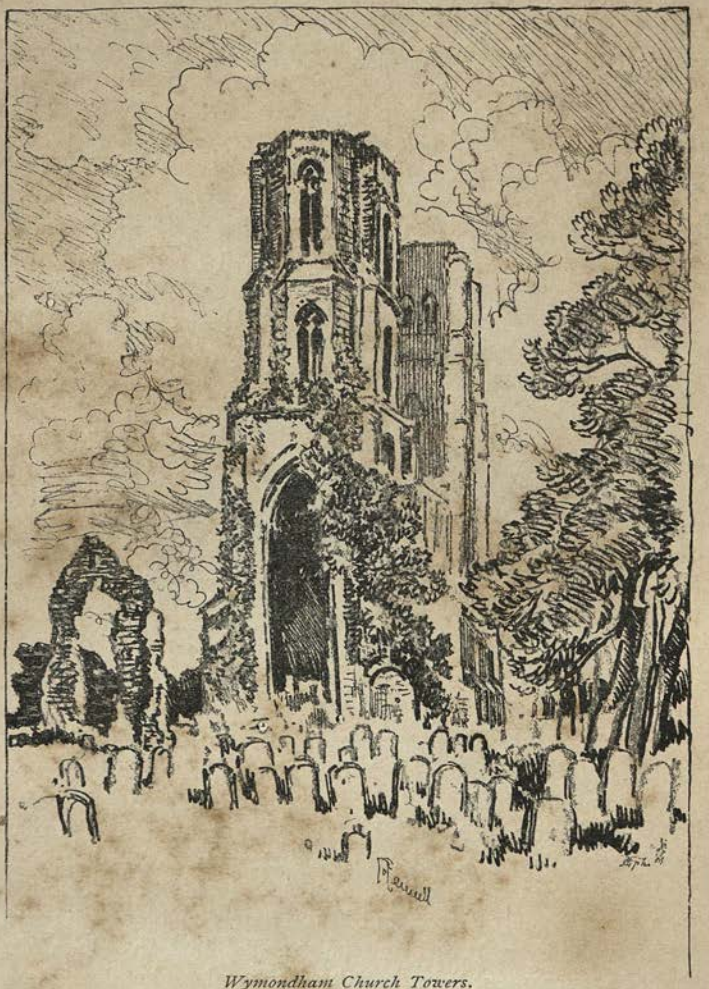
Now it strikes one as very curious that a church should have a tower at each end of the nave, therefore Wymondham (locally "Windham") church is an architectural puzzle until

you understand that one of its towers does not really belong to it, but is that of a Benedictine priory, of which there are a few other inconsiderable remains. This priory was founded, early in the eleventh century, by William D'Albini, who filled the important office of chief butler to his king, an office so profitable to its holder that he was able to endow the priory in a very lavish manner. He was buried in its church, as were several of his descendants, who bore the title of Earls of Arundel. One of the most distinguished of them was the



Wymondham Church.

first earl, the son of the king's chief butler, who was known as "William of the Strong Hand." The exploit which gained him the name is thus recounted by Dugdale. "It happened that the Queen of France, being then a widow and a very beautiful woman, became much in love with a knight of that country, who was a comely person and in the flower of his youth; and because she thought that no man excelled him in valour, she caused a tournament to be proclaimed throughout her dominions, promising to reward those who should exercise themselves therein according to their respective merits; and concluding that if the



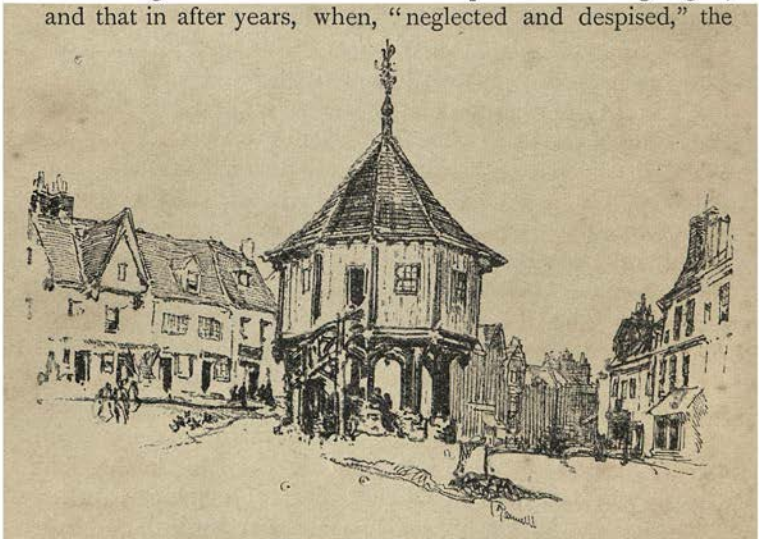
Wymondham Church Towers.

person whom she so well affected should act his part better than others in those military exercises she might marry him without

any dishonour to herself. Hereupon divers gallant men from foreign parts hasting to Paris, among them came this our William de Albini, bravely accoutred, and in the tournament excelled all others, overcoming many and wounding one mortally with his launce; which being observed by the queen, she became exceedingly enamoured of him, and forthwith invited him to a costly banquet, and afterwards bestowing certain jewels upon him, offer'd him marriage. But having plighted his troth to the Queen of England, then a widow, (he) refused her: whereat she grew so discontented that she consulted with her maids how she might take away his life; and in pursuance of that design enticed him into a garden where there was a secret cave, and in it a fierce lyon, into which (!) she descended by divers steps, under colour of shewing him the beast. And when she told him of its fierceness he answered that it was a womanish and not manly quality to be afraid thereof, but having him there, by the advantage of a folding door, thrust him into the lyon. Being therefore in this danger, he rolled his mantle about his arm and, putting his hand into the mouth of the beast, pulled out his tongue by the root, which done he followed the queen to her palace, and gave it to one of her maids to present it to her. Returning therefore into England with the fame of this glorious exploit, he was forthwith advanced to the Earldom of Arundell, and for his arms the lyon was given him, nor was it long after that the Queen of England accepted him for her husband." This Queen of England was Adeliza, widow of Henry I. Her noble spouse from the day of his return to his native land was known as "William of the Strong Hand."

Interest in a house with a tragic history disposes me to take a longer route than is necessary to get back to Norwich. Instead of keeping to the main road through Hethersett, I leave it for the by-road leading to Stanfield Hall. In the middle of the sixteenth century this moated manor-house was the home of Sir John Robsart and his daughter Anne or Amy, who after-

wards, when the wife of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, died under mysterious circumstances at Cumnor Hall. It is not unlikely that at Stanfield Hall Dudley first met his future bride, for he was one of the officers who accompanied the Earl of Warwick when he came into Norfolk to suppress the Kett Rebellion, and the earl and his staff were for a night Sir John Robsart's guests. So it may well be that it was on the old moat bridge or under the trees in the park the wooing began; and that in after years, when, "neglected and despised," the



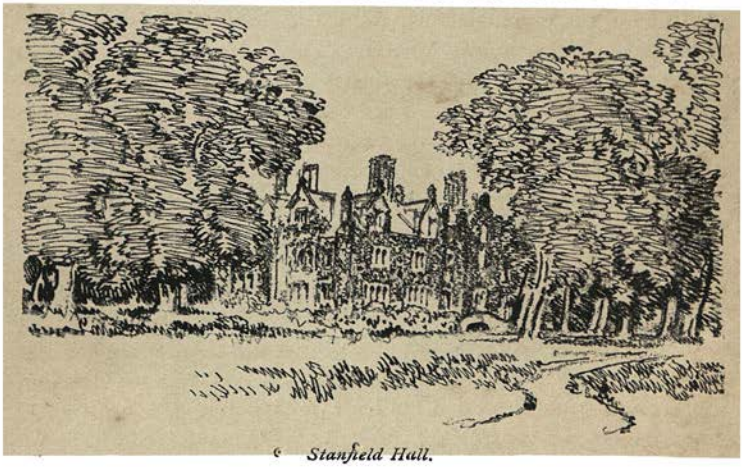
Wymondham Market Cross.

unfortunate countess was left to pine in solitude at Cumnor Hall, she often longed for the return of such days as were hers when she lived in her Norfolk home; and in other words uttered the complaint Mickle has made for her:

> "If that my beauty is but small,
> Among court ladies all despised,
> Why didst thou rend it from that hall
> Where (scornful earl) it well was prized?"

Though not so closely as with Cumnor, which is haunted by her ghost unto this day, the memory of the cruelly wronged Amy will always be associated with Stanfield Hall. But to Norfolk folk generally the house has a far more gruesome interest because it was, in 1848, the scene of one of the grimmest tragedies in the criminal annals of the county. It was then occupied by Mr. Isaac Jermy, Recorder of Norwich; his son, Mr. Isaac Jermy Jermy, and the latter's wife. For some time there had been a dispute between Mr. Jermy, senior, and one of his tenants named James Bloomfield Rush. This Rush, a man of violent temper and vindictive nature, planned how he might murder his landlord and his family, and obtain possession of the hall. Having previously been steward of the estate, he was in a position to draw up certain deeds, and skilfully forge Mr. Jermy's signature. This he did, and then, with secrecy and deliberation, concocted a plan by which he hoped to be able to commit wholesale murder without bringing suspicion upon himself. Being well acquainted with the habits of the Jermy household, he had little difficulty in finding an opportunity for carrying out his villainous design; and on a dark November night he disguised himself, armed himself with a double-barrelled gun, and took up a concealed position near the front door of Stanfield Hall. It was Mr. Jermy's custom to take a short stroll outside the hall every evening after dinner. On this particular evening he had scarcely left the porch when Rush shot him dead. The murderer then entered the hall, and encountered Mr. Jermy's son, whom he also shot at and killed. Alarmed by the reports of the gun, Mrs. Jermy and a female servant appeared on the scene, and were both fired at and wounded by Rush, who then escaped from the house, leaving behind him a document implying that his terrible deeds were committed by two men who were known to be claimants to the Stanfield estate. Returning to his home at Potash Farm, he instructed a girl with whom he was living—a governess whom he had deceived and compelled to assist

him in drawing up the fraudulent deeds—to swear to any one who might inquire about him that he had not been away from home more than ten minutes that evening. This the girl promised to do; but eventually, when Rush was suspected and arrested, she told the truth, and her evidence went a long way towards securing his conviction. He was hanged outside Norwich Castle, in the presence of a vast crowd of onlookers from all parts of the county. Charles Dickens visited Stanfield Hall a few weeks after the murders were com-



Stanfield Hall.

mitted. He thought the house had a "murderous look that seemed to invite such a crime." He was impressed, too, with the careless way in which search was being made for Rush's weapon. "There was nothing on earth," he wrote, "to prevent any of Rush's labourers from accepting five pounds from Rush, junior, to find the weapon and give it to him."

There is nothing in the aspect of either Stanfield Hall or Potash Farm—now called Hethel Wood Farm—to suggest the grim events associated with them; but fifty years ago, when Rush's awful crime was fresh in the memory of the country folk,

men were known to go far out of their way to avoid these houses, and women and children would not venture abroad in Hethel after nightfall. Such tragic affairs make a great impression on rural districts, and the story of them is repeated time after time for years after their occurrence. Even now there are men who seldom let slip an opportunity for telling the tale of the Rush murders; only this morning I heard it all again from the landlord of a Wymondham inn, who could remember the murderer, having met him frequently on market days. At Bracon Ash, too, I meet a man whose father, who is still alive, assisted in the search for the gun; and he shows me a torn and discoloured newspaper containing an account of Rush's execution. But by this time I am tired of listening to gruesome reminiscences; and seeing by a signpost that a certain by-road leads to Ashwellthorpe, I am reminded of a ballad about the Elizabethan hall there, or maybe some older house which stood upon its site, and was the home of one of the Knyvetts, a man famous for his hospitality and liberality. No poor man, it was said, ever sought his aid in vain, so he had many visitors and claims upon his generosity. The ballad describes the arrival at his house—on a Christmas Eve when he was entertaining a large party of guests—of a mysterious stranger, who, for a wonder, failed to ask for arms, but produced from his pocket an acorn, and, as the ballad says,

> "In the presence of them all,
> In the middle of the hall
> He sat down the acorn playne:"

That the stranger was no common visitor, and the acorn no common acorn, was soon evident, for

> "While one could drink a cup
> There did an oake spring up,
> Which was so huge and tall,
> With arms it so put out,
> And the branches all about,
> That it almost filled the hall."

It proved an awkward obstacle to dancing and the playing of the customary Christmas games; so, having expressed his amazement at the oak's miraculous growth, the host requested the stranger to remove it. To do so was no easy matter. The oak would not vanish with the astonishing quickness with which it had appeared. So the stranger

> "Loudly he did call,
> And two came into the hall,
> Who were both stout and strong.
> And with the tools they had,
> To work they went like mad,
> And laid this oake along."

But even when they had felled it they could not move it, and the stranger said it was because they had no strength. So he summoned further aid in the shape of two goslings, "young and green," which came "whewting in," and carried the oak out of the hall. I should like to be able to believe this story; but Blomefield says it is incredible, and when such an authority discredits it I cannot but have my doubts.

My way now lies across Mulbarton Green, a large village green, on which Thomas St. Omer, a thirteenth century justice itinerant of Cambridgeshire, held an annual fair and erected a gallows. An Early English church stands close to the green, and in it I find a mural monument to Sir Edwin Rich, surmounted by an hour-glass and bearing an inscription which strikes me as curious enough to set down here. It runs:—"Our life is like an hour-glass; and our *riches* are like the sand in it, which runs with us but the time of our continuance here, and then must be turned up by another." Then follow these lines:—

> "Thetford gave me birth, and Norwich breeding,
> Trinity College in Cambridge learning;
> Lincoln's Inn did teach me law and equity;
> Reports I have made in the Courts of Chancery.
> And though I cannot skill in rhymes, yet know it
> In my life I was mine own death's poet;

For he who leaves his work to others' trust
May be deceived when he lies in the dust.
And now I have travelled through all these ways,
Here I conclude the story of my days;
And here my rhymes I end, then ask no more;
Here lies Sir Edwin *Rich*, who lov'd the poor."

Late in the afternoon the heat of the sun, which has been tempered by a pleasant breeze, becomes somewhat oppressive; so, finding I have not time to visit Caistor and the Roman camp there, I dismount and rest for a while on the hedgebank of a meadow where some half-a-dozen haymakers are tossing the newly-cut upland hay. The fragrance of the hay—one of the sweetest of country scents—is mingled with that of eglantine, for the hedge is largely made up of briars, just now decked with roses of that deep pink hue which distinguishes them from the field and dog roses. Tall stemmed parsleys lift their white umbels half way up the hedge; climbing above them are black and white bryony and twining wild hop bines. Bordering the meadows is a small copse, which seems full of nightingales. All day long I have heard nightingales singing; now there are at least half a dozen in full song within a stone's throw of where I am resting. I wish the other birds would remain silent for a while, so that I might hear only the nightingales; but thrushes, blackbirds, and whitethroats are in full chorus, pipits soaring and trilling, and a cuckoo is calling from the copse. A small boy, the son of one of the haymakers, seats himself beside me, and tells me that a pair of blue tits have a nest in an old cattle-shed in an adjoining pasture, and a butcher bird has a larder in the hedge on the other side of the meadow.

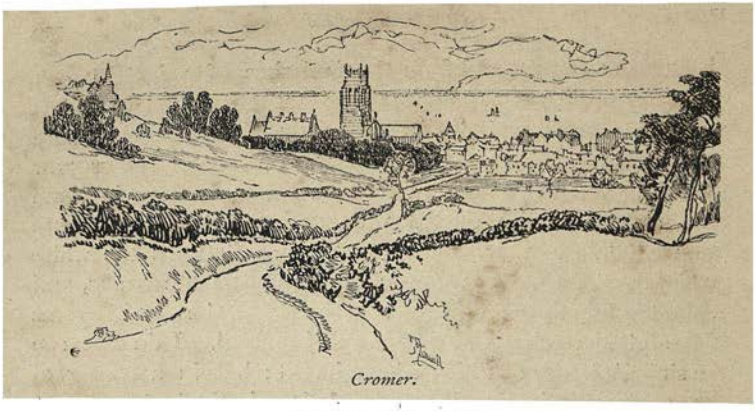
The lad's father joins us, evidently glad of the excuse the presence of a stranger offers for leaving his work for a while. Although he wears a straw hat, the drooping brim of which almost hides his eyes, his face is tanned to the hue of autumn oak leaves, and his neck is scorched and blistered by

the sun. Like many of the Norfolk farm-hands he is also a fisherman, and when harvest is over usually finds employment on one of the Yarmouth or Lowestoft drifters, sometimes sailing with the East Coast fleet which goes mackerel-catching off the Devon and Cornish coasts in early spring. He has been at work, he tells me, since half past five this morning; but was abroad an hour earlier, for his home is three miles away, and he has to walk to and from the meadow every day. Such a walk, however, is "nowt to speak on:" as a lad he worked on a farm five miles from his father's cottage, and except when lucky enough to get a "lift" in a waggon or tumbril had to make the daily journey backwards and forwards on foot. Pointing to a scar on his forehead, he said it was caused by a kick from a cart horse one winter morning when, after sleeping in a hayloft to spare himself a five mile walk in a snowstorm, he slipped down the loft ladder and fell among the feet of a horse in the stable below. Boys nowadays, he goes on, with an impressive glance at his own offspring, who is munching a crust of bread left over from his father's dinner, don't know what work is; if they have to get up before daylight they think they are "hard put upon." They are taught at the schools all sorts of things that he never learnt, but not how to work as their fathers did when *they* were lads. All the "young 'uns thowt on now" war to get away from the land and into the towns. I suggest that a better remuneration for labour in the towns has something to do with this; but he only shakes his head and says that living costs a "sight" more in towns than in the country. He is not, however, against "a chap's goin' to sea, for there his livin' costs him nowt."

Then he goes back to his work, and his son, quite unmoved by his father's remarks, begins prowling along the hedge, searching for birds' nests. For a time I sit watching the haymakers, two of whom wear bright scarlet belts by which I can distinguish them when the whole width of the meadow is between us; but presently the monotonous repetition of a

chaffinch's song, uttered from the branches of a pollard oak above my head, grows so distracting that I am glad to follow the lad's example and take a ramble round the meadow. Where its borders have escaped the scythe, wild flowers and grass grow in rank luxuriance, so that at times I am knee deep in them and my clothes are dusted with pollen. Drooping brome grass and tall foxtails, filling every space between the white parsleys and purple knapweeds, quite conceal the banks, and where the brambles arch over from the hedge, the blue blossoms of the tufted vetch are abundant and beautiful. I do not see the shrike's larder of which I have heard; but in a corner of the meadow, a nightingale stays and sings in the hedge while I stand within a yard of it—close enough to see the throbbing of its throat. When I come near where the men are working, I notice that the hands of one of them—an elderly man with a pheasant's tail feather stuck jauntily in his hat—have been so severely stung by some fly or gnat that they are swollen and bleeding; but he says he is used to being stung in hot weather, and pays no heed to it. I fancy he must have been the victim of an insect which Broadland dyke-drawers call the marsh fly, which draws blood from their hands and faces before they feel its sting.

The shadows lengthen, and the churn-owls, those "sombre swallows of the night," begin hawking above the hedgerows; but the fragrance of the hay is so sweet, the June roses, and what Richard Jefferies calls the "sweetbriar wind" are so delightful, that I want to stay where I can see and feel them. Along the roads the flowers are dust-laden, and so, too, is the breeze; here the only dust is flower and grass pollen, and I mind it no more than the big brown bees which cover themselves with it when they draw the honey from the blossoms, or the hawk moths when they are fluttering among the woodbines.



Cromer.

CHAPTER VII

BLICKLING, CROMER, AND THE COAST ROAD TO WELLS

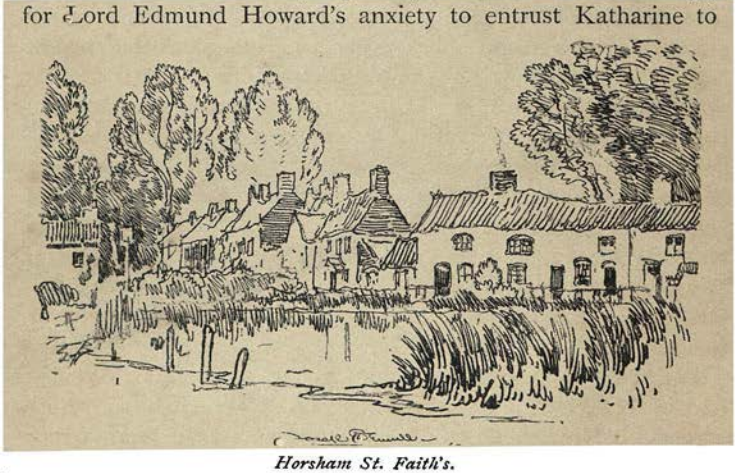
THE two-and-twenty miles of highway between Norwich and Cromer are more remarkable for sylvan scenery than almost any other stretch of road of like length in East Anglia. At Stratton Strawless, Blickling, and Gunton are fairly extensive woodlands, notable for the size and beauty of many of their ancient trees. Around Aylsham the country is exceptionally well wooded; and if, instead of entering Cromer by the main road, the traveller makes a divergence by way of Overstrand, he finds the by-roads charmingly cool and cloister-like. On the morning when I set out from Norfolk's chief town for the coast a summer shower has drenched the roadside hawthorns, whose musky scent hangs heavy in the air; it has made the woods, too, fragrant; and the west wind, breathing softly through mossy and lichened boles, is laden with the odours of moist earth, larch, and fir. The great horse chestnuts of Horsham and Stratton Strawless are losing their hyacinthine clusters of bloom, and the ground is in places covered by scattered elm seeds; but the rain-wet woods still wear their fullest and freshest green. And the rain, while it has washed the dust from the hedgerows, has wet the birds' whistles, and they are singing louder and with a

more liquid sweetness than they were before the shower. Such a shower, laying the dust and refreshing the wild flowers, is very welcome in the early morning of a summer day; and now that the clouds are gone and the sunshine is streaming into the woodland glades, a delightful day's journey seems ensured. The road, like most of the Norfolk highways, is a good one, its smooth surface and the absence of any considerable hills making cycling a mode of progression entailing little fatigue. This is a fact I am fully able to appreciate; for I am setting out on a long journey—a journey which will take me not only through some of the loveliest scenery and quaintest hamlets of the Norfolk coast, along the old Palmers' Way to the famous shrine of Walsingham, and through the Prince's pleasance of Sandringham, but along the Ouse valley to Ely's glorious fane of the Fens.

It is strange that two of the wives of England's most married monarch should have spent several years of their childhood in hamlets lying only a few miles apart along the Norwich and Cromer road. Katharine Howard of Horsham and Anne Boleyn of Blickling may have rambled in the same Norfolk byways and rose-garlanded lanes and—although in different decades, for Katharine was twenty years younger than Anne,—have gone a-maying in the same meadows and copses. Both these unhappy women paid a heavy price for the favour they found in the eyes of the amorous king. Both lost their heads; but while in Anne's case there will always be some doubt as to the extent of her wrong-doing, in that of Katharine there can be no question as to her indiscretion, whatever may be said as to her guilt. Still, it may well be that Lord Edmund Howard's lovely daughter sinned unwittingly; and, so far as her earliest imprudence is concerned, it cannot justly be urged against her that she sinned with intent; for how can a child not yet in her teens be held accountable if she becomes the victim of a base and despicable retainer? And even if in after years she strives, by favouring those who blackmail her, to "hush-up" the story of

her early misfortune, is her action so very surprising or blameworthy? The story of Katharine's relations with Henry Manox, that wretched servant in the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk's Horsham household, is a miserable one; but it reflects far more discredit on the duchess, who was Katharine's guardian, than upon the child herself. It is difficult to understand how any woman with the slightest regard for her youthful charge could have been so unmindful of her obvious duties.

There was some excuse, especially after his second marriage, for Lord Edmund Howard's anxiety to entrust Katharine to



Horsham St. Faith's.

his step-mother's care. The gallant soldier, who had been mainly responsible for the victory of the English at Flodden, had gained nothing save glory by his heroism. Only a few years after the time when he was held in highest honour on account of his daring deeds he had to hide from duns and bailiffs; not because he was not the recipient of court patronage (which he had never sought), but because there was no need for his services. His pathetic appeal for assistance moves the heart even now, though centuries have elapsed since he made it. "I would trust," he wrote, "to do acceptable

service; and liefer I had to be in his grace's service at the furthest end of Christendom, than to live thus wretchedly, and die with thought, sorrow, and care. I may repent that I was ever a nobleman's son born, leading the sorrowful life that I live. . . . I am informed there shall be a voyage made unto a new-found land with divers ships, and captains and soldiers in them, and I am informed the voyage shall be profitable to the king's grace. Sir, if your grace think my poor carcass anything meet to serve the king's grace in the said voyage, for the bitter passion of Christ be you my good lord therein; for now I do live as wretched a life as ever did gentleman being a true man. . . . I have nothing to lose but my life, and that I would gladly adventure in his service, and to get somewhat toward my living." Wolsey, to whom this appeal was addressed, apparently ignored it, and it was not until a long time afterwards, when Lord Edmund's niece, Anne Boleyn, had begun to exert an influence upon the king, that the gallant knight was appointed to the Comptrollership of Calais. So, as I have said, it is no wonder that he was glad to place his little daughter in a household where he believed she would be well cared for.

But the Horsham household was the least fitting society for a child then at her most impressionable age. The Dowager Duchess of Norfolk showed her not the slightest tenderness; instead of exercising a personal supervision over her education, she allowed her to associate always with the waiting women, and share their quarters at night. These waiting women, Miss Strickland points out, seem to have taken a "fiendish delight in perverting the principles and debasing the mind of the nobly-descended damsel who was thrown into the sphere of their polluting influence;" and when Katharine, who while yet a child in years acquired "the precocious charms of womanhood," attracted the objectionable attentions of Henry Manox, a "scoundrelly player on virginals," who may have been her music master, she had no one to protect her. A woman

called Mistress Isabel acted as go-between in this disgraceful affair, and was succeeded by a Horsham villager named Dorothy Barwike, who afterwards, when the king's jealousy was aroused, betrayed Katharine's youthful confidence. That Manox was nothing better than a heartless profligate is plain from the fact that he boasted of the favour his child mistress had shown him, and admitted the dastardliness of his designs. This despicable conduct he subsequently, when arraigned by Katharine, attributed to his passion for her, which, he urged, "so transported him beyond the bounds of reason that he wist not what he said;" but it had the happy effect of causing her to dismiss him from her for ever.

I do not care to linger long over this unpleasant "love" affair, and only refer to it here because it occurred at Horsham, and, in all probability, was Katharine's first step along the road that led to her ultimate downfall. Her connection with Derham, who was also a Norfolk man, did not begin until she had removed from Norfolk to Lambeth, so there is no need to rake among the ashes of another long dead scandal. Indeed, while the warmth of the sun after the moisture of the shower is hourly opening fresh wild rosebuds, and the summer breeze is whispering through the woods, there is nothing to tempt me to stir up the mud in historical cesspools. Besides, I am well on my way to Aylsham, where the church is said to have been founded by John of Gaunt, the court of whose duchy was held in the pleasant old town. It is not at Aylsham, however, that I care to stay long, but at Blickling, which is about a mile beyond the town. Yet before riding along the oak-bordered road which leads to the Boleyns' old manor I find time to seek out the tomb of Humphrey Repton, the landscape gardener, in Aylsham churchyard; and to read the inscription on the tablet erected to his memory.

> "Not like Egyptian tyrants consecrate,
> Unmixed with others shall my dust remain;
> But mould'ring, blending, melting into earth,

Mine shall give form and colour to the rose ;
And while its vivid blossoms cheer mankind,
Its perfumed odours shall ascend to heaven."

About four hundred years ago, when Margaret Paston made it her business to keep her husband, who was engaged in London, well informed of what was going on in his native county, the local gossips had much to say about the manor of Blickling. The history of the manor dates back many centuries. It was held by King Harold, the site of whose "palace." is about a mile from the hall. When the Battle of Hastings had been fought and won, the Conqueror bestowed it upon his chaplain, Bishop Herfast ; and it was afterwards held by successive bishops of Norwich and the Dagworths and Erpinghams. In Margaret Paston's time it was possessed by Sir John Fastolff, who, it was rumoured, as he was building himself a stately castle at Caistor, proposed to dispose of it. The Pastons, Knyvetts, Cleres, and other leading county families eagerly awaited the name of the purchaser. At last it came out that the manor had passed into the hands of one Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, who two years before had been Lord Mayor of London, and had distinguished himself by maintaining peace during a congress held in his jurisdiction between the rival factions of York and Lancaster. He was a Norfolk man, but came of a family of French origin who had settled at Salle, a village a few miles from Blickling. As a lad he had been bound apprentice to a London mercer ; and when he had amassed great wealth it was only natural that he should seek a quiet country home in his native county in which to spend his declining years. So he came to Blickling, and took up his abode in the manor house which Sir Nicholas Dagworth had built in the fourteenth century, and which had been the home of Erpingham and Fastolff, those two famous knights of Agincourt. Both his son and grandson afterwards held the manor and lived upon it ; but the wealth gained by the Lord Mayor seems by some means to have been squandered or

become congested; for the grandson, Sir Thomas Boleyn, informed Cromwell that "when I married I had but fifty pounds to live on for me and my wife so long as my father lived; and yet," he adds plaintively and somewhat reproachfully, "she brought me forth every year a child." One of those children was the ill-starred Anne Boleyn. Whether she was born at Blickling is uncertain: Hever Castle in Kent, and Rochfort Hall in Essex, which were both held by the Boleyns, also claim to be her birthplace; but she certainly spent some years of her childhood at Blickling, and knew well this leafy road from Aylsham to her father's hall. Tradition associates her closely with her Norfolk home—that is, with Sir Nicholas Dagworth's manor house, not the stately Jacobean mansion which Sir Henry Hobart, the Lord Chief Justice, built, and which is one of the glories of the county. King Henry is said to have been married to her at Blickling; and Blomefield, on very unsatisfactory grounds, asserts that the statement is probably true. Miss Strickland quotes an even more interesting tradition, and one which, strangely enough, has its counterpart in an Essex hamlet. She tells us that in Norfolk it was believed that after Anne's execution her body was secretly and by night removed from the Tower of London and conveyed to Salle, where it was interred in the grand old church for which the village is remarkable. Until a few years ago visitors were shown a black marble slab, without inscription, and were told that this was Anne Boleyn's tomb. At Horndon-on-the-Hill, in Essex, a similar slab had a like story.

Is it unreasonable to suppose there may be some truth in this old tradition? Is it unlikely that after the ill-fated queen's stormy career had come to its tragic end, her friends were anxious that her body should rest in a church which had less grim associations than that of the Tower, and which for generations had been the burial place of her family? As Miss Strickland remarks, Wyatt closes his account of Anne's death with the words, "God provided for her corpse sacred burial, even in a

place as it were consecrate to innocence,"—words which do not fitly apply to an interment in the Tower church without religious rites. Unfortunately for those who would like to believe in the Salle tradition, the tomb slab there was raised some years ago and nothing found beneath it. Whether the black monument at Horndon-on-the-Hill has also been lifted I cannot say, but if it has not I sincerely hope no one will attempt to solve its mystery. The people of Salle are no happier for the shattering of their ancient belief. The inhabitants of Horndon-on-the-Hill would have no cause to thank the inquisitive antiquary who robbed their black tomb of its secret.

Fortunately it is beyond the power of any antiquary to banish the Blickling rustics' belief in the Blickling ghosts. These are the ghosts of Anne and her father, Sir Thomas Boleyn. On every anniversary of her execution, Anne revisits the home of her childhood. She rides in a black hearse-like carriage drawn by four headless horses and driven by a headless coachman. She is dressed all in white; and her hands support her severed head, which rests upon her knees. Just before midnight this startling apparition appears and advances slowly up the avenue which leads to the hall. At the hall door it vanishes; but within the old Jacobean mansion there are corridors along which a headless spectre glides. No one heeds it; for the occupants of Blickling Hall have grown accustomed to its visits—even the servants hear without a tremor the rustling of its ghostly garments. But the appearance of Sir Thomas Boleyn is not to be treated with such calm indifference. Sir Thomas has a yearly penance to perform: he must cross in a night forty county bridges. The route he chooses is not quite clear; but he has to cover a great deal of ground, and I have heard of his being seen at Caister, which is a long way from Blickling Hall. He, too, rides in a coach drawn by headless horses, which have a greater incitement to speed than whip and spur; for wherever they go they are followed by a pack of horrible fiends, who, as they pursue the coach, rouse the countryside by

cries as fearful and awe-inspiring as those of the old Fenland bogles, the "hell hounds of the marshes." Another version of this story has been set to rhyme. It tells of how, when the news of the death of Anne and her brother, Lord Rochfort, was brought to Blickling,

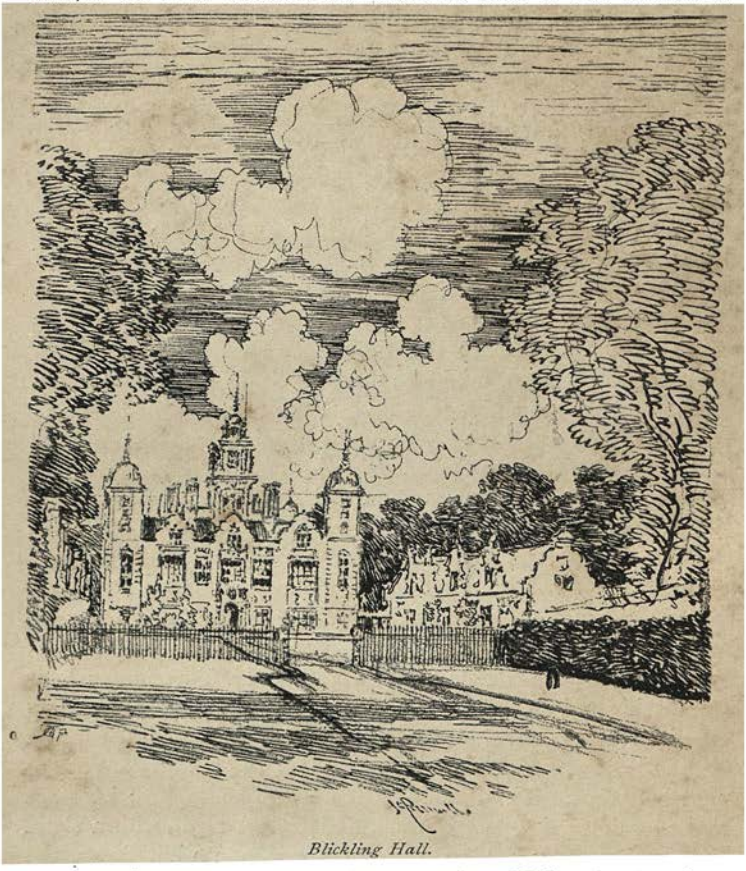
> "That very time, at dead of night,
> Four headless horses took their flight,
> Dragging behind them as they ran
> The spectre of a headless man.
>
> "Beneath his arm his head he bore,
> Its tangled hair all wet with gore.
> Pursued he was by demons foul,
> With piercing shriek and dismal howl.
>
> "O'er hedge, o'er ditch, o'er fence, o'er gate,
> They gallop on at heedless rate;
> Over twelve bridges they must bound
> Ere morn shall stop their horrid round.
>
> "Sometimes by Fastolff's ruined tower
> They through the neighbouring country scour,
> Their snortings loud (without their heads!)
> Make people tremble in their beds."

These old ghost stories remind me of another which, though it has no connection with Blickling, bears sufficent resemblance to the Blickling tales to be mentioned with them. Dr. Jessopp has told it fully in his *Frivola*, so I will content myself with giving it in brief. It is another story of the phantom coach which makes midnight journeys along many of the old Norfolk roads, and it was told Dr. Jessopp by one of his ancient parishioners.

About midway between Thetford and East Dereham is Breccles Hall, a fine Elizabethan house, which, like many other Norfolk manor houses, is now a farmhouse. It is, as Dr. Jessopp says, one of those houses which if they are not haunted ought to be; for it was a favourite hiding-place of proscribed priests in the reign of the Virgin Queen, the residence of an

erratic lady who insisted on being buried in an upright position, and two of its owners are said to have committed suicide. Haunted or not, it was at this house that the phantom coach called one night about a century ago and "fetched" away George Mace. This George Mace was a Watton man, a loafing ne'er-do-well, who, like the owls, was only active at night, and then, again like the owls, very frequently among the game coverts. On the night in question he and a band of kindred spirits met in a plantation near Breccles Hall, presumably with the intention of doing a little poaching there or in the adjoining coverts of Lord Walsingham's Merton estate. Undoubtedly Mace was the ringleader; for he was a "mysterious sort of man," who exerted considerable influence over his acquaintances and confederates. It was agreed that the band should divide into small parties in order that the night's proceedings, whatever they may have been, might be more likely to result in mutual profit, and that at a given time they should meet at the back of Breccles Hall, and there "settle up before the moon went down." All went well, from the poachers' point of view, until settling-up time came, when Mace was found to be missing. The rest of the band, crouched in a shed behind the hall, grew impatient; but though they peered in all directions and listened intently could neither see nor hear anything of their "mysterious" leader. Slowly the moon sank towards the horizon; still there was no sign of the missing man. Then, suddenly, the rumbling of wheels broke the silence of the night; and a few minutes later the flashing of coach-lamps was seen through the stained glass windows of the old hall—so bright was the light, indeed, that "the very coats of arms were painted on the hoar-frost" at the watchers' feet. The coach stopped at the hall door; its steps were let down, its door opened, and closed again with a slam. Then there was utter darkness; the moon went down, the lamps went out, and the coach vanished—vanished without a sound! Unnerved by this supernatural occurrence, the band of lawbreakers betook themselves to their several homes, every

man, no doubt, vowing that never again would he keep a midnight vigil in the neighbourhood of Breccles Hall. At any rate, if no such decision was come to then it was arrived at



Blickling Hall.

next morning, when "Jarge Mace was found lying dead at the front door of Breccles Hall. Not a mark upon his body; not a stain upon his garments; his eyes staring glassily, stiff and cold!"

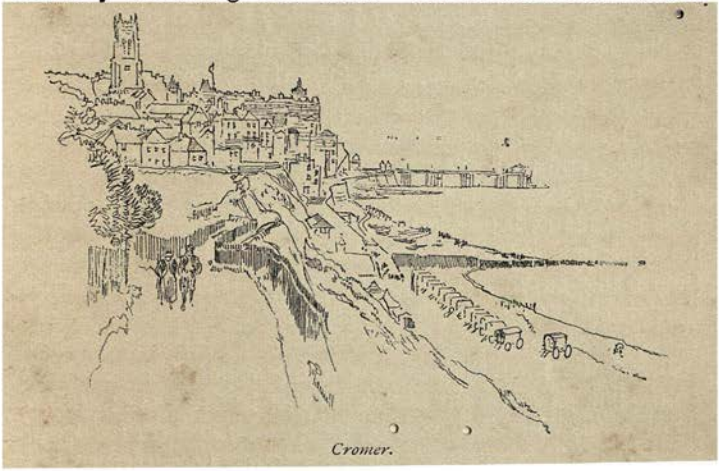
Blickling Hall, the grand old house for which Norfolk is indebted to Sir Henry Hobart, looks as though it were built for all time. The passage of nearly three hundred years has done nothing to rob it of substantiality or beauty; and I doubt whether Blickling Park, notwithstanding the havoc which winter storms have wrought among its oaks, elms, and chestnuts, ever looked lovelier or the Blickling gardens more beautiful than they do to-day. The hall is hidden from passers along the road from Aylsham until they come quite close to its fine front, which stands only a little way from the roadside. Its sudden appearance then is calculated to make a vivid and lasting impression on every one who can appreciate the characteristic features and details of Jacobean architecture. Led up to by leafy limes and clipped yew hedges, its richly decorated entrance seems a fitting portal to have admitted the notable men who have lived and died in the hall, and the many distinguished guests who have been entertained here. And if you are privileged to enter the house and see the splendid library collected by Mattaire, the statues of Anne Boleyn and Queen Elizabeth, the portraits of kings and queens, soldiers and courtiers, politicians and ambassadors, which adorn the walls; and if when you have seen these treasures you stroll through the lovely gardens, where statues and fountains from Clement Paston's vanished hall at Oxnead are preserved; and beside the mile-long lake in the thousand acre park, you cannot but admit that here is one of the stateliest homes of England. Having seen these things, heard the musical murmur of the fountains in the gardens, the sweet singing of the birds in the Blickling woods, and pictured faces of "fair women and brave men" gazing out of the old oriel windows, you cannot do better than turn into the little church near the hall. For there are buried Dagworths and Boleyns, Hobarts and Kerrs, members of the famous families who in turn have held the manor of Blickling; and there, too, is one of the finest and costliest monuments Mr. Watts has ever designed.

I stay too long at Blickling to have time left in which to

turn aside again from the Cromer road and visit Erpingham church, whose tower is visible from the road. Already the sun is sinking behind a fir-crested western ridge; so I am compelled to forgo a closer acquaintance with the village whose name was borne by that fine old soldier who fought with John, Duke of Lancaster, through the Spanish wars, and built the grand cathedral gate at Norwich. The breeze is dying away with the day; scarcely a leaf rustles on the roadside trees or a petal falls from the hedgerow roses. After the sun has gone down the moonlight is so bright that shadows cast on the road are black as ink. Not the smallest fleece of cloud-drift floats across the sky; but although the atmosphere is clear, near the ground it is saturated with moisture and fragrant of dewy grass and wild flowers. Hawk moths are feasting on the nectar of woodbine and convolvulus; the scent of the honeysuckle suggests the bowers of an old-world garden. The birds are unusually silent for the early hours of a summer night; hardly a twitter comes from the ivy enfolding the gnarled old oaks. But there are faint sounds of creatures creeping beneath the hawthorns and briars, so I know that hedgehogs are abroad in search of the *helicidæ* which are drinking the night-dews. These sounds, however, are imperceptible unless I remain quite still and listen intently; for wild creatures are shyer at man's approach on moonlight nights than when dense darkness hides them. Then, they are often astonishingly bold and active, as though conscious of the inability of human eyesight to penetrate the gloom; and you may hear them rustling among the withered leaves in dry ditches, scampering carelessly through the wood's tall bracken, and splashing into dark pools and silent-flowing streams. To-night they are more guarded in their movements—that is, those of them which do not possess the power of aerial flight. Scores of bats are flitting about the pollard oaks; once a great noctule bat screams like a swift as it circles high above the top of a rugged elm. Countless white moths are fluttering about the hedges; sometimes one darts

against me and leaves a tiny patch of white dust on my clothes. Where the banks are overgrown with gorse the pale blue fires of the glow-worms are burning ; one clump is decked with them as for some midnight frolic of the fairies.

I am glad to see a barn owl flying over the fields near the Gunton woods ; for in some East Anglian districts the owls have become sadly scarce of late years. There was a time when I could see one or more almost every evening, and had little difficulty in finding their nests. This is the first owl I have



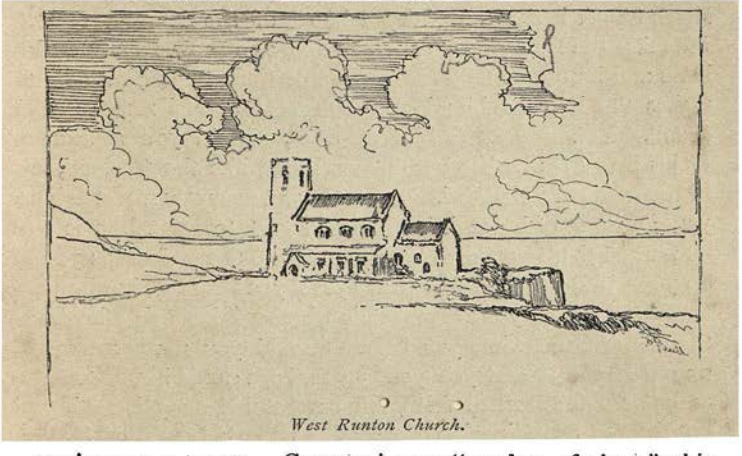
Cromer.

seen in Norfolk for several months ; its appearance is as welcome as the return, after a long absence, of an old friend. But I miss the corncrakes which used to call to me from amid the corn and the flowering upland hay. Where they are gone, I cannot say ; but there is not a single crake calling to-night where twenty years ago you might have heard a score. The silence of the night was marked as soon as the sun set : as midnight approaches it grows intense. The road is almost without human travellers ; though once I hear the hoof beats of a horse on a by-road not far away. Even in and around the farmsteads there is scarcely

an indication of wakeful life: not a dog barks, not a horse stirs audibly in the red-roofed stables. A moving shadow on the road proves to be that of a horse rubbing itself against a pasture gate. But at length the weird rattle of a churn owl breaks the silence. It comes from the midst of the North Repps woods. Then, suddenly, beyond a wide field of moonlit wheat there is a bright gleam of silver radiance, a thousand times brighter than the most brilliant phosphorescence that ever flashed from a tropic ocean. It is the moonlight on the sea; and while I stop to gaze upon it a full-rigged ship—one of the old merchant ships which have not yet wholly vanished from the world's great ocean highways—glides across the radiant streak of quivering light. Every line of her stands out as boldly as a black paper silhouette, and until she passes out of that shimmering stream of glory her progress is like that of a ship of the dead. Apparently there is as little wind at sea as ashore; for the ship is a long time in crossing the moonglade, and an hour later, when, from a window of a house on the cliffs, I look out again upon the sea, her red light is still in sight.

Before the least lie-abed of Cromer caddies has appeared on the links, I climb the steep path that leads on to the Lighthouse Hills. But the sun is up before me; and the sea is all agleam with flashing spray; for a boisterous breeze has sprung up during the night and there is a white line of broken water all along the shore. I have to fight my way up the cliff and I reach the top as breathless as though I had scaled its crumbling face. The sand martins are just coming out of their holes, and it is easy to see that the wind makes it hard for them to launch themselves into mid air. Some of them dart forward a few yards and are driven back to their holes by the force of the gale; others manage to rise above the cliff's edge and are blown inland, as powerless as thistledown to offer resistance to the wind. Where the cliff has not been undermined of late, silvery sea buckthorn

wildly waves its slim branches; yet the tiny storksbill which stars the scanty turf keeps all its petals till I pluck it, when the pink stars vanish as if by magic, leaving only the musky stem in my hand. No 'longshore boats are venturing out this morning, and it may well be so; for the bow of a northward bound steamer is often hidden by clouds of spray. The air is so clear that the woods and fields beyond the hollow in which the town lies are as definitely outlined as when seen through field glasses; but eastward, towards Overstrand and Sidestrand, the cliffs fade away into a blue mist of salt rain whipped from the



West Runton Church.

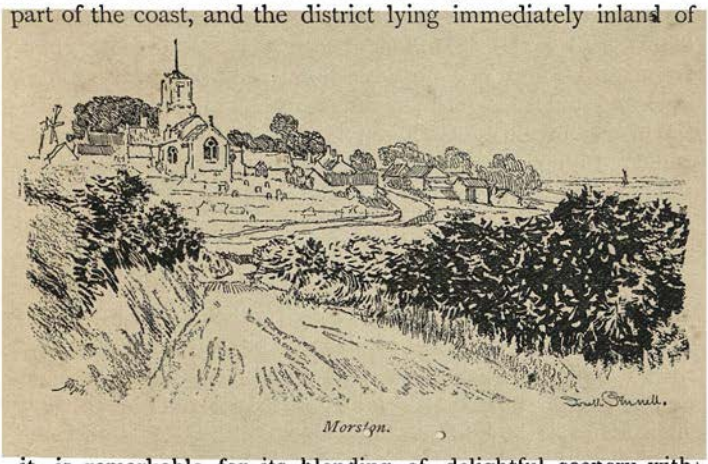
tossing wave crests. Cromer is no "garden of sleep" this morning. The wind and sea would buffet it into wakefulness even if it were drugged with a draught distilled from its own poppies.

This should be a morning to set the church bells ringing in that vanished village of Shipden which lies beneath the sea! But all I can hear above the roaring of wind and sea is the scream of a sea-bird and the song of a lark which the storm cannot keep from soaring. If there were any truth in those old legends of tolling bells in the sea depths, such a

gale as this should make the East Anglian coast as musical as the "City of Churches" on a Christmas Eve; for many a hamlet, and many a church which was a landmark to seamen, has gone down cliff between Aldborough and Lynn. But now it is the children only who listen for the bells, just as it is the children only who go about at night in fear of Black Shuck. If this were a stormy night instead of a stormy day the old fisher-folk of the coast would say it were just the time for Black Shuck to be abroad; for he revels in the roaring of the waves and loves to raise his awful voice above the howling of the gale. Black Shuck is the "Moddey Dhoo" of the Norfolk coast. He takes the form of a huge black dog, and prowls along dark lanes and lonesome field footpaths, where, although his howling makes the hearer's blood run cold, his footfalls make no sound. You may know him at once, should you see him, by his fiery eye; he has but one, and that, like the Cyclops', is in the middle of his head. But such an encounter might bring you the worst of luck: it is even said that to meet him is to be warned that your death will occur before the end of the year. So you will do well to shut your eyes if you hear him howling—shut them even if you are uncertain whether it is the dog fiend or the voice of the wind you hear. Should you never set eyes on our Norfolk Snarleyow you may perhaps doubt his existence, and, like other learned folks, tell us that his story is nothing but the old Scandinavian myth of the black hound of Odin, brought to us by the vikings who long ago settled down on the Norfolk coast. Scoffers at Black Shuck there have been in plenty; but now and again one of them has come home late on a dark stormy night, with terror written large on his ashen face, and after that night he has scoffed no more.

"It is on sand alone," said George Borrow to a friend "that the sea strikes its true music—Norfolk sand: a rattle is not music;" and his friend, not to be outdone, affirmed that "the best of the sea's lutes" was "made by the sands of Cromer." The luting of the Cromer sands is pitched in

a rather high key to-day, and though it is a delightful and bracing experience to stand on the cliff-top, facing the wind and watching the waves come rolling in, that shrill note which occasionally rises higher than the gull's scream suggests that the day would pass more pleasantly if spent in the shelter of the Repps or Felbrigg woods, or in making an inland excursion which will bring one to the coast again at Trimingham or Mundesley, where the cliffs are higher and the view even finer and wider than that from the Lighthouse Hills. This part of the coast, and the district lying immediately inland of



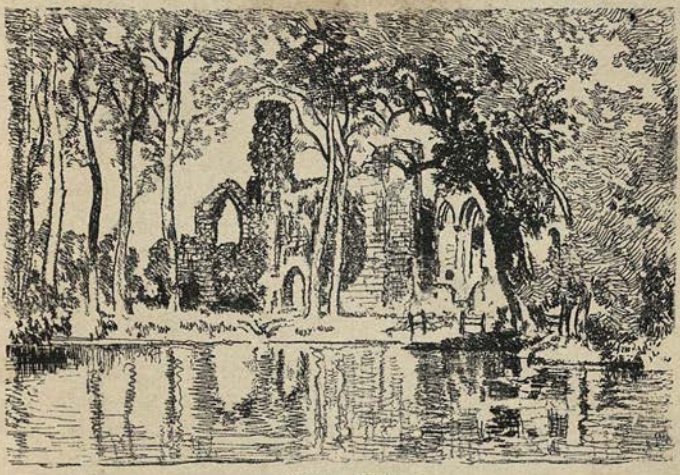
Morston.

it, is remarkable for its blending of delightful scenery with places of romantic, historical, and personal interest. The difficulty is, unless one intends making a long stay here, in choosing between the many charming hamlets, quaint fishing villages, lovely woodland walks, fine old churches, and stately Elizabethan and Jacobean houses. At Overstrand the tomb of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton in the chancel of the ivy-clad ruined church attracts admirers of the worthy abolitionist of slavery; and when they find it they are content to stay near the church all day, listening to the sea's song echoed by the heathery hills, and the birds' songs in the Overstrand woods and lanes. At Gres-

ham the foundations may be traced of the castellated house which Margaret Paston and a few retainers held for some time against Lord Molynes and a thousand of his followers. Felbrigg is noted for its ancient seat of the Windhams and the Felbrigge brasses in its little church. But it is the peaceful little hamlets nestling in sheltered vales between the cornfields and heather-clad hills and the sea which are the chief charm of the coast near Cromer; these and the homesteads roofed with mossy thatch, the woodlands carpeted with bluebells and anemones, and the country folk, half fishermen half farm-hands, who garner the harvests of land and sea. These are what bring to Cromer those who wish to enjoy the loveliness of Devon scenery without the relaxing air of the south; and they must be made the most of while we have them. For in a little while red brick terraces will have taken the place of many of the thatched homesteads, and every heathery hillside will have its huge hotel.

The coast road between Cromer and Wells can, in regard to charming scenery and quaint and interesting villages, compare favourably with any road of like length along the shores of England. For several miles it is bordered on one side by bracken-covered or wooded hills, which to-day are shimmering in a sea-haze, and in places blue with wild hyacinths; seaward the land rises abruptly to those heights from which the Norfolk smugglers used to flash their signals to luggers lying off the shore. It is a wilder country than any I have passed through since leaving the heathlands near Dunwich; the cultivation of crops has hardly been attempted on the hillsides; and little pebble-built hamlets, such as Weybourne, which comes in sight soon after Sheringham is left behind, are so obviously ancient that they seem part of nature's handiwork rather than that of man. But there is a district east of Sheringham which possesses far more ancient relics of human workmanship; relics which mean that the hills and high heathlands overlooking the

sea were a haunt and dwelling-place of prehistoric man. For at Aylmerton, and more especially on Aylmerton Heath, are hundreds of circular pits which have a close resemblance to those in Yorkshire and Wiltshire, and which apparently were, when roofed with turf or boughs, the homes of some long-vanished primitive race. At Aylmerton they are known as the "Shrieking Pits;" there being a local tradition that at times a white figure is seen wandering distractedly among them, wringing its hands and crying mournfully. In the adjoining parish of

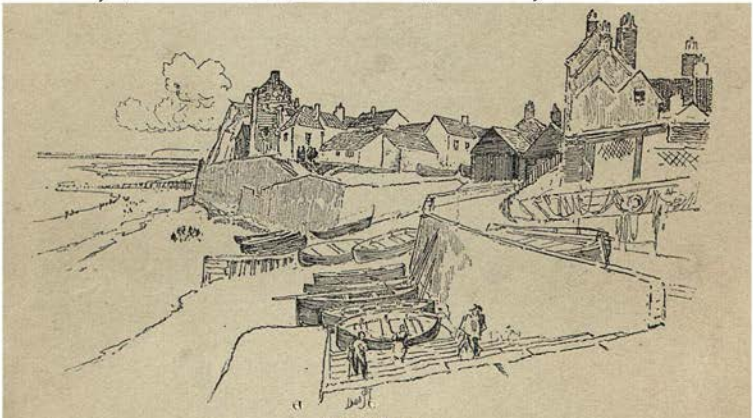


Beeston Priory.

Beeston Regis are many more of these pits; and there, too, are the ruins of a priory founded by Lady Isabel de Cressey in the reign of King John. The ruins now form part of some farm buildings, and though not extensive are easily perceived in a pleasant vale between the coast and the coast road just before the latter enters Sheringham. The west end of the priory church, a small tower, and a portion of the chapter-house, are the most interesting features of this priory, whose monkish inmates seem to have spent an uneventful time within

its walls. At any rate I cannot find that it possessed any reliques which brought pilgrims here; and whatever importance it may have had was dwarfed by that of the famous shrine at Walsingham.

Sheringham, to all appearance, is bent on becoming a successful rival to Cromer in competing for popularity, and its efforts in that direction have not tended to preserve in it those features which are the chief charm of coast villages. True, its west cliff commands a grand view of the coast as far as Blakeney Point; but I am bound for the Point itself; and as for the



Sheringham.

Salthouse marshes which lie between it and Sheringham, the road runs close beside them. But it is interesting to note that rather more than two hundred years ago the people of Sheringham went about in great fear of being attacked by Dutch privateers, which were occasionally seen cruising off the coast. So in 1673 they petitioned the Lord Lieutenant and Deputy-Lieutenants of the county that they would be pleased to consider the great danger which threatened them. "Our Town Joynes," they pointed out, with an impressive successsion of capital letters, "upon ye Maine sea, and we are afraid every

night ye enemy should come ashore and fire Our Towne when we be in our Bedds; for ye Houses stand very close together, and all ye houses Thatched with straw, that in one houres time ye towne may be burnt, for we have nothing to Resist them But one Gunn with a broken carriage and foure Musquetts which we bought at Our Owne cost and charges; which is a very small defence against an enemy: and likewise wee have no pouder nor shot for ye said Gunn, nor Musquetts, when wee stand in need: Wee Therefore humbly beseech your Hon^rs

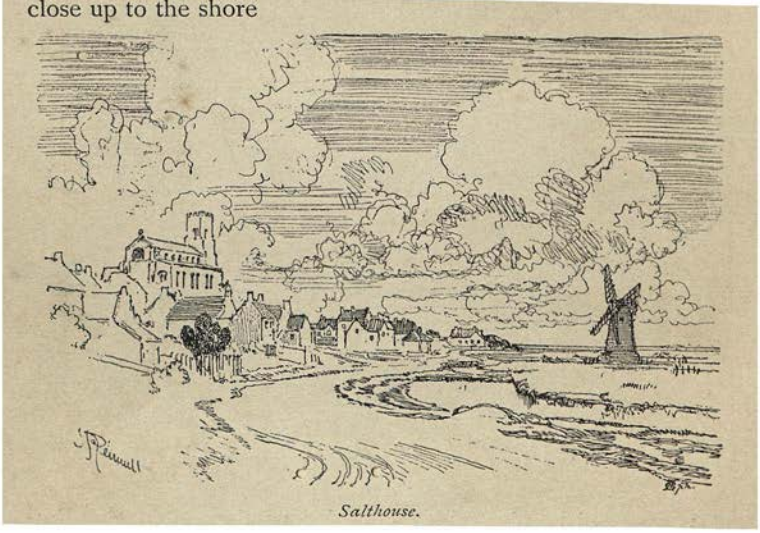
Salthouse.

yt you would be pleased to consider ye danger wee live in, and that your Hon^rs would grant us foure or five Musquetts more, and half a hund^d pound of pouder, and half a hund^d pound of Bullet; and wee should thinke wee were able to defend ye attempt of a Dutch privateer." This pathetic appeal, I am glad to know, was answered by the granting of six muskets and the required amount of ammunition, the only stipulation being that the martial men of Sheringham should not "imbocill ye said arms and amunition." There seems to have been great fear in those days that if a hostile fleet

designed to effect a landing on the East coast it would choose the neighbourhood of Sheringham in which to do so ; and this gave rise to the local rhyme that

> " He who would old England win
> Must at Weybourne Hoop begin."

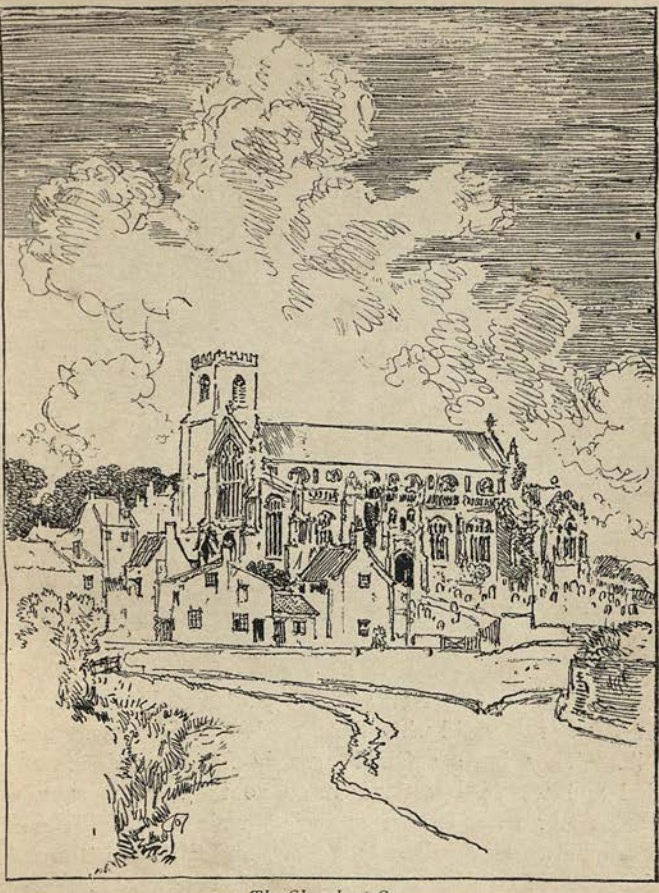
There were grounds for such fears, for there is excellent anchorage for large ships off this part of the coast, deep water running close up to the shore



Salthouse.

Having passed through Weybourne, I soon enter upon that part of the coast road which borders the Salthouse marshes. It was upon these marshes that the sea broke in in the winter of 1897, doing great damage to the village of Salthouse and the adjoining township of Cley ; places which for quaintness and precarious situation are remarkable among Norfolk's seaboard hamlets. Salthouse is a village of grey pebble cottages straggling along the inland border of the flat and featureless salt marshes to which many of its inhabitants, who

in winter are seldom abroad without their guns, look to provide a sufficient quantity of wild fowl to eke out their



The Church at Cley.

scanty earnings with the scythe, hoe, and dyke-dydle. Cley was once a port possessing considerable maritime trade; its

old custom house is still one of its most striking buildings. But it is for its church that Cley is now famous; for it is one of the finest on the coast, its structural magnificence and elaborate carvings testifying to the wealth of the port before it became neglected and decayed. The isolated situation of both Cley and Salthouse has tended to preserve in them a "behind-the-times" appearance which is certainly not characteristic of the Norfolk coast villages. Buffeted by the boisterous winds which, keen with the chill of the northern ice-fields,

Cley.

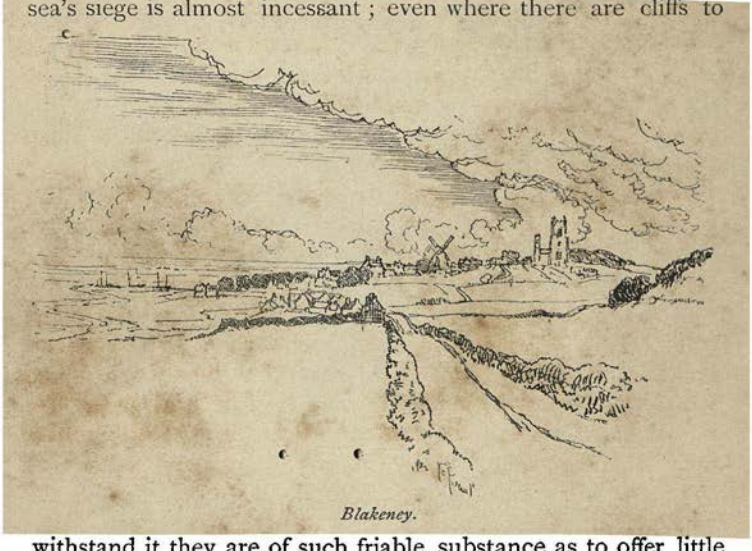
sweep across the grey North Sea, they show as brave a front to the storm as they did when their beach-stone houses were first built. They have suffered severely for their defiance of wind and wave; but never more so than in 1897, when a great storm set the waves raging against the frail barrier of sandhills between the salt marshes and the sea. Then the inhabitants of the little grey cottages gazed anxiously across the marshes, well knowing what must happen if the sea broke through their ramparts of sand; and, while they gazed, that which they so much feared occurred with appalling suddenness.

An account of the inundation, written while a thousand acres of marsh were still covered by the wide salt flood, says that "between eight o'clock and noon the crests of the breakers were visible to an unusual extent above the ridge of the sea-wall. Presently a rent was made, speedily to be followed by others, and mighty waves coursed inland, filling the dykes and flooding the marshes. . . . . To such a height did the water rise that the waves in some cases broke against the upper storeys of the houses, flowed out by the back doors, and destroyed the buildings and garden

Cley.

produce in the rear." Furniture was washed out of houses, fowls were drowned by the hundred, and several of the villagers had to be taken out of their bedroom windows by boats and barely escaped with their lives. A man I meet in Salthouse street tells me he was an eye-witness of what occurred. Another says that he assisted the coastguards in getting the rocket apparatus within reach of a stranded ship, and when he returned home his house was in ruins. Together these men point out to me traces of the havoc wrought by the sea. Here, a cottage stands just as the sea left it—windowless and with one wall

dashed to the ground; there, a long stone wall has only recently been built to replace one which the waves destroyed. "Is there any likelihood of the sea coming in again?" I ask. "Like enough, if the wind happens to blow long enough and strong enough from the right quarter," is the reply. "You see there's only the marram-hills between the marshes and the sea; and they can't stand long against a strong scour." In fact, all along the coast between Yarmouth and Cley the sea's siege is almost incessant; even where there are cliffs to



Blakeney.

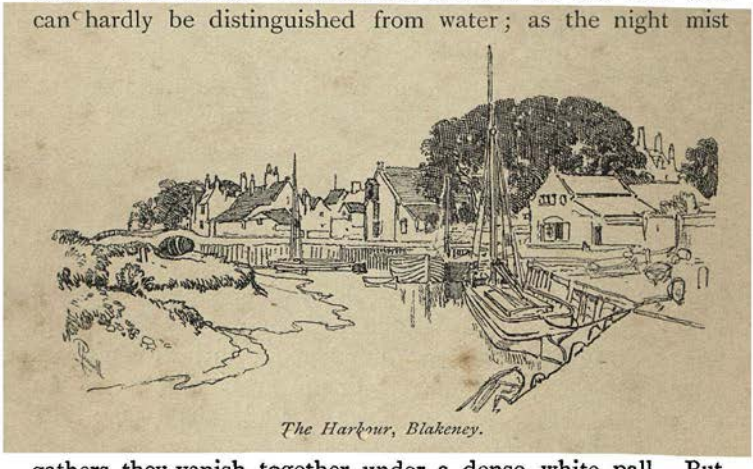
withstand it they are of such friable substance as to offer little resistance to the waves. "It would take a heap o' money to make us quite safe; more than Cley and Salthouse are worth all together; so we have to take our chance." This seems to be the general opinion of the natives of the district, who, like the old-time fenmen, have to content themselves with helping the wind to heap up the sandhills and keeping a watchful eye on their marsh and river "walls."

There is fine sport for the gunner along the sandhills and

on the salt and "meal" marshes when cold weather drives the wild fowl southward. Here, where the hooded crow forages among the stranded flotsam left by the tide, and the terns have their last Norfolk nesting-place, he may squat for hours in a "duck-hole" and enjoy enough sport to make the time pass so quickly that he seems to have been there only an hour. Ducks, widgeon, and many kinds of shore birds are often abundant; now and again, if he is lucky, he may bag one of the wild grey geese which yearly come to the marshes. Woodcock may be flushed; and there are times when the partridges seem to forsake the fertile uplands for the barren dunes along the shore. Rabbits are numbered by the thousand on the seaboard warrens: when the sea broke in hundreds of them were drowned in their burrows. The "moorlands of the sea" some one has called the "meals" lying eastward of Wells; for it is here that the wild sea lavender flaunts its pale mauve blossoms as plentifully as heather grows on the moors. At night these lonesome tracts are deserted except by the flight-shooter, who crouches in some hollow, waiting for the flighting of the fowl. Plovers, redshanks, and curlews fly piping and wailing through the gloom. Loud above their feeble voices sounds the strange "honking" of the great wild geese. In the migration season vast numbers of birds alight here after their long and weary flight across the sea; and many rare species have been shot along the coast. Of the arrival of the migrants Mr. C. J. Cornish writes:—"By night most of the shore birds and sea birds come—stints, plovers, terns, ducks, and phalaropes. But by day the land birds drop in. You may wander down at all hours towards Blakeney Point without seeing a bird, and on returning find the bushes of suæda and furze full of thrushes and fieldfares . . . . Walking on the great shingle bank at dusk, while the eternal roar of the waves on the nine-mile barrier of stones rises and falls with a noise like the roaring of a ten-inch shell, you may see the little birds coming in from the sea, just topping the waves, and alighting

only a yard beyond the froth of the last roller on the beach. Then they flutter to a grass tuft, and, creeping in, fold their weary wings and sleep in the sound of the breakers."

At Blakeney Quay several corn barges are awaiting the arrival of the steam-tug which is to tow them down to the coasting craft lying at the river mouth. Across the salt marshes and wide beds of ooze, now reddened by the ruddy light of sunset, the smoke from the tug's funnel lies like a thin line of cloud. Seaward the shore is so low that land can hardly be distinguished from water; as the night mist



The Harbour, Blakeney.

gathers they vanish together under a dense white pall. But there is no mist in the lovely Vale of Stiffkey, through which I ride on my way to Wells; and the green slopes which lead down to its clear rivulet are voiceful with the songs of birds. In the hush of evening it seems an abode of eternal peace. Cuckoos are calling; nightingales, which will soon be gone from the vale, are fluting in the copses; and down by the stream's side, where willow-herbs are already topping the sword-leaved sedges, a sedge warbler is chuckling almost incessantly. Overhead the rooks are flying homeward from the marshes; for some time a heron is in sight, winging

slowly towards the heronry in Holkham Park. At the approach of an angler, brushing his way through the lush grass, a water rat dives suddenly from the bank of the stream; for a while a solitary landrail crakes amid a tangle of nettle and hedge parsley in a field corner. In Stiffkey village men and women are chatting across garden fences and on doorsteps; up and down the narrow street scores of house martins are chasing moths and midges. So peaceful is this lovely vale, so contented seem the dwellers in it, that it is hard to believe that

The Lantern at Blakeney Church.

the inhabitants of Stiffkey have been accused of being a degenerate folk, more especially some of the men, who are said to be content to live on the hard-won earnings of their wives and daughters. True, I see a few unkempt loafers in the little groups of gossipers; but they are not more numerous than in other villages I have entered in the course of my travels. Yet it is an undeniable fact that many of the women of Stiffkey are mainly responsible for the maintenance of their homes and families, and that they do this by following an

occupation which soon undermines their health and is as hard and wearisome as any work well can be. They are cockle-gatherers. When the tide has ebbed as many as fifty of them often go down on to the muddy coast flats, where, bare-legged and often exposed to biting winds, they collect such heavy loads of shell-fish that they can hardly carry them. But carry them they do, staggering under their weight, back to the pleasant little village in the vale, from whence they are sent to the market at Lynn.

By a lonesome road, here and there affording glimpses of distant ooze flats and sea creeks growing chill and grey as the daylight wanes, I find my way into Wells, which I reach just in time to mingle with the latest loiterers on its quaint old quay. Wells calls itself a seaport; but for all one sees or hears of the sea from the quay to-night it might be miles away. A flood tide, however, is filling the river; and a few small sea-going craft loading at the wharves plainly prove that it is possible to sail from Wells to the waters of the great deep. By daylight I find that wide and oozy marshes lie between the town and the sea; and I hear a story of a man who was lost in a fog on the marshes and not found until he had spent a day and night there.

Stiffkey, near Wells.

Wells.

CHAPTER VIII

WALSINGHAM, HOUGHTON, AND SANDRINGHAM

THAT Wells is a dull little town there is no denying. The fact that it is a seaport contributes little to its attractiveness. There are towns miles up the Broadland rivers which possess nearly all the maritime features of which Wells can boast, and a greater wharf space by the riverside. But the country inland and east and west of the town, though not all so lovely as the Vale of Stiffkey, is remarkably interesting. Presently I shall leave Wells by a road running almost due south, and a few miles' journey will bring me to the ruins of the famous shrine of Walsingham. Not far to the left of that road are the remains of Binham Priory, which in King John's reign experienced so long a siege that its unfortunate monks had to drink rain water and eat bran bread. Adjoining Binham is Langham, where Captain Marryat lived and amused himself by working a wild fowl decoy; while within a mile or two of Wells, near the road to Binham, is the snake-shaped camp of Warham, a unique and perfect earthwork

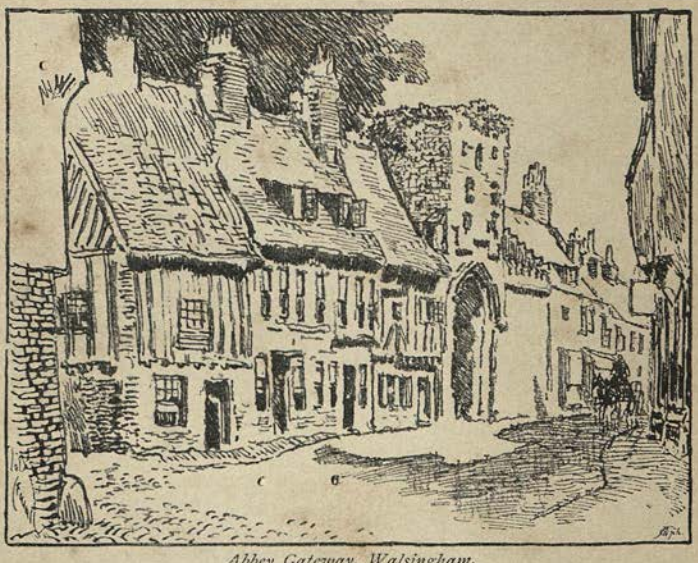
believed to have been constructed by the ninth century Norse sea rovers who ravaged and settled upon the coast. Burnham Thorpe, the birthplace of Lord Nelson, lies just beyond the Earl of Leicester's Holkham estate—there is a road to it through Holkham Park. In a directly opposite direction, on the borders of Langham, is Cockthorpe, the native village of another famous admiral, Sir Cloudesley Shovel. The road to Holkham is a rather dreary one, and no one who has not special permission to view the art treasures preserved in the hall can be advised to travel it; but the history of the Holkham estate is not uninteresting.

To read of Holkham as it was a little more than a century ago and then see it to-day, is to be convinced that Thomas William Coke, who in his day was better known as "Coke of Norfolk," was a very clever man. On the vast estate to which he succeeded on the death of his uncle's widow his enterprise wrought a wonderful transformation scene. He was wont to say that when he first knew Holkham it was no uncommon thing for two rabbits to be found fighting for the possession of a blade of grass; this being his way of asserting that the ground was almost absolutely barren. The entire surface soil of the estate consisted of sand, and it seemed a hopeless task to try and make it agriculturally productive; but underneath the sand a stratum of marl was found, and by digging up and spreading the marl the nature and value of the land underwent a great change. Where only rye had been grown, large crops of wheat and barley were raised; as a stock-breeding centre Holkham became famous all over England; and to "Coke of Norfolk" was due the discredited mangel-wurzel's reinstatement in public favour. So it is little wonder that this great landowner's name and opinions had great weight not only in Norfolk but all over the country; that his portrait is found in the guildhalls of the chief county towns; and that his statue adorns the portal of East Dereham Corn Exchange. An inscription over the main entrance to Holkham Hall announces that "This seat, on an

open barren estate, was planned, planted, built, decorated, and inhabited in the middle of the eighteenth century by Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester." When his house was built the earl was reported to find life in it very dull and melancholy; he might as well have dwelt in the midst of a wilderness. "I am," he said, "Giant of Giant Castle, and have ate up all my neighbours." On another occasion he remarked that his nearest neighbour was the King of Denmark. After the death of Thomas William Coke, who, on the accession of Queen Victoria was raised to the ancient peerage of his family, a very different account was given of life at Holkham. The deceased earl was then included with the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Lord John Russell, and Lord Brougham in *The Book of the Illustrious*, and of his Norfolk home it was grandiloquently written:—"Behold the magnificent woods, the fields so highly cultivated and so richly productive, the noble farm-houses and buildings, the neat and comfortable dwellings for the labourer, with the gardens attached; the flocks and herds that animate while they adorn the landscape, and, above all, the universal air of industry and content, of affluence and plenty, which reign over all—no one can behold these things without admiration of the individual who has thus improved the bounties it has pleased God to bestow upon him, and through him upon others. Of the munificence which planned and sustained such meetings as the sheepshearings, which opened the halls of Holkham to thousands during the week; of the festivals to the great, the learned, the scientific, and the curious; of the warm and noble hospitality which makes that mansion the abode of unbounded cheerfulness; of the frank reception given to his tenantry, to the yeomanry at large, and to every man connected with agriculture, it is needless to speak: all these truths are known, and have placed the character of Mr. Coke at the very top of the list of England's country gentlemen and England's landlords." The life-story of "Coke of Norfolk"—it is a long one, for he lived to be ninety years old—is too much made up of

agricultural technicalities to be generally attractive; but to the Norfolk farmer it reads like a romance—an agricultural romance —and he wonders what the great experimenter would have done in "these hard times."

This morning I am not in the mind to visit Holkham, but to follow in the footsteps of thousands of old-time pilgrims and make my way to Walsingham. A five mile ride along a road in no way remarkable for its scenery brings me into the streets



Abbey Gateway, Walsingham.

of the pleasant but decayed little town. Here I have no difficulty in discovering all that is left of its notable shrine; for the abbey gateway, an unimposing perpendicular structure, abuts closely upon the main street, and from a neighbouring by-way the ruined east end of the abbey church is visible in spite of the dense verdure of embowering trees. As a matter of fact the ruins of Walsingham Abbey are neither extensive nor particularly impressive, and if its shrine had not been perhaps

the most famous in England few people would go out of their way to see them. Besides the gateway and the east end of the abbey church, there is only a fine west window of what may have been the monks' refectory to suggest the character of the buildings which were visited by pilgrims from all parts of Europe, and which are said to have been so magnificent. The town, however, contains many evidences of its antiquity, and some of its houses must have looked very much the same when King Henry VII. came here to pray for "helpe and deliverance" from the troubles caused by Lambert Simnel as they do to-day. The church, too, and its grand font, have undergone little change since the sixteenth century, though it did not then contain that splendid monument to Sir Henry and Dame Jane Sidney which is one of its chief ornaments.

The original shrine at Walsingham, a small chapel dedicated to the Virgin and said to have been an exact copy of the Sancta Casa at Nazareth, was founded by Richoldis de Faveraches early in the twelfth century. For a time its resemblance to the Virgin's home did much to bring pilgrims here; but when Nazareth fell into the hands of the Mohammedans the Walsingham monks caused a rumour to be spread about that the Virgin had deserted her home in the Holy Land and established herself in the shrine at this little Norfolk town. Afterwards they affirmed that the Walsingham chapel was nothing less than the Sancta Casa itself, removed from Palestine, and as such its fame extended until the Palmers' Way to Walsingham, still traceable across north-west Norfolk, became one of the busiest and most travelled roads in the kingdom. As the wealth of the shrine increased, a magnificent priory arose beside the humble chapel, and afterwards a church, which Erasmus described as "splendid and beautiful," testified to the richness of the harvest reaped from the pilgrims to the shrine.

It is to Erasmus, who visited Walsingham in 1511, we are indebted for what we know of the chapel and priory as they were in his day. The original chapel, he says, "is built of

wood, and pilgrims are admitted through a narrow door at each side. There is but little or no light in it but what proceeds from wax tapers yielding a most pleasant and odoriferous smell, but if you look in you will say it is the seat of the gods, so bright and shining as it is all over with jewels, gold and silver." Impressed as he was with the wealth of Walsingham, Erasmus was too familiar with monkish practices to believe all the tales he was told of miracles wrought in connection with the shrine. Indeed, the monks, even if they were unaware of the identity

Walsingham Abbey.

of their guest, must have been relieved when he and his companions took their departure; for they were accustomed to deal with pilgrims who came prepared to credit any and every statement made to them, and to attribute all wonders to supernatural agencies. Erasmus was incredulous, and did not scruple to show it. "On the north side," he writes, "there is a gate which has a very small wicket, so that any one wanting to enter is obliged first to subject his limbs to attack, and then must stoop his head. Our reverent guide related that once a knight

seated on his horse escaped by this door from the hands of his enemy, who was at the time closely pressing upon him. The wretched man, thinking himself lost, by a sudden aspiration commended his safety to the Virgin who was so near; and lo! —the unheard of occurrence!—on a sudden the man and his horse were together within the precincts of the church, and the pursuer fruitlessly storming without!" Erasmus asked his guide whether the seeker and finder of sanctuary persuaded the monks to swallow this wonderful story. The guide did not question its truth, and pointed to a brass plate nailed to the gate, on which the miraculous event was represented. "It would be wrong to doubt any longer," said Erasmus, who then continued his investigations. "To the east of this is a chapel full of wonders. A joint of a man's finger is exhibited to us. I kiss it and then ask—'Whose relics were these?' He says, St. Peter's. Then observing the size of the joint, which might have been that of a giant, I remarked, 'Peter must have been a man of very large size.' At this one of my companions burst into a laugh, which I certainly took ill, and pacified the attendant by offering him a few pence. Before the chapel is a shed, under which are two wells full to the brink: the water is wonderfully cold, and efficacious in curing pains in the head. They affirm that the spring suddenly burst from the earth at the command of the most holy Virgin. I asked how many years it might be since that little house was brought thither. He answered, 'Some centuries.' 'But the walls,' I remarked, 'do not bear any signs of age.' He did not dispute the matter. 'But the wooden posts, the roof, and the thatch are new; how then do you prove that this is the cottage which was brought here from a great distance?' He immediately showed us a very old bear's skin fixed to the rafters, and almost ridiculed our dulness in not having observed so manifest a proof." Another marvel Erasmus saw was a "jewel at the feet of the Virgin, which the French named toadstone, because it so imitates the figure of a toad as no art could do the like; and what makes the miracle

greater, the figure does not project, but shines as if enclosed in the jewel itself." The placing of this toadstone at the Virgin's feet was symbolical of the victory of good over evil, and the toadstone really was of little value except as a symbol. A far more prized possession of the Walsingham monks was a phial containing some of the Virgin's milk!

Many kingly pilgrims came to Walsingham, among them Henry III., Edward I., Edward II., Bruce of Scotland, and Henry VII. The last-named monarch, after the defeat of Lambert Simnel, presented that rebellious upstart's banner and a silver image to the shrine. Queen Isabella was another of the royal pilgrims; and from East Barsham Hall, the old home of the Fermors, which I shall see presently, Henry VIII. walked barefoot to Walsingham, bearing with him an offering of a chain of gold. This, of course, was before his agent Cromwell visited the shrine and carried off its wonder-working image to be burnt at Smithfield. Margaret Paston, too, must have been among the pilgrims who came here, for when her husband lay ill in London she wrote to him, "My moder be hestyd a nodyr ymmage of wax of the waytte of yow to oyer Lady of Walsyngham, and sche sent iiij nobelys to the iiij Orderys of Frerys at Norweeche to pray for yow; and I have be hestyd to gon on pylgreymmays to Walsyngham, and to St. Levenardys for yow." The Augustinian keepers of a shrine which could attract such pilgrims as these should have had little to fear from the Franciscans who started an opposition convent at the other end of the town; but when they heard that Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Clare, proposed to found such a convent, they implored her to abandon the idea. She, however, was not to be persuaded; and after the convent was built much ill-feeling arose between the monkish rivals, the priory gates having to be kept closed at night on account of the Franciscans' frequent attempts to steal the jewels of the shrine.

Children on their way home from school are playing to-day along the Palmers' Way; and the old town of Walsingham,

once "almost susteynyd by the resort of pylgrymes," is as sleepy a place as any in this county where every considerable village is called a town. Modern pilgrims awheel scarcely glance at the old chapel or "Shoe House" at Houghton-in-the-Dale, where their devouter forerunners cast off their shoes before approaching the holy shrine; and if they pause at Walsingham it is to quench their thirst with something other than the old monks' "Wishing Wells" supply. No longer do travellers rely upon the Milky Way, or Walsingham Way, as it was once called, to guide them to the abbey gate: a road map serves their purpose better and permits of more deviations from the direct route than the palmers of old indulged in. Even though the ruins of the priory are now in good hands and not likely to suffer further from neglect, one can still feel with the old rhymster whose verses are preserved in the Bodleian Library, when he laments that it is

> "Bitter, bitter oh to behoalde
> The grass to growe
> Where the walles of Walsingham
> So stately did showe."

And again when he mourns that

> "Oules doe scrike where the sweetest himmes
> Lately wear songe.
> Toads and serpents hold their dennes
> Where the palmers did throng."

Still, it is pleasant to think of the palmers who, guided by the stone crosses by the roadside, thronged what was in their day the main highway of Eastern England. The town of Walsingham was then one large hostel for the accommodation of pilgrims; and the road by which I leave it, and which soon brings me to the old Shoe House, daily bore fresh prints of weary feet. If, however, one may believe the writer of an old ballad, the thoughts of all the travellers along this road were not centred upon the famous shrine; for, according to him, a certain traveller passed this way in search of his true love, and

when he met a homeward-bound palmer, this is how he accosted him :

" As ye came from the holy land
Of blessed Walsingham,
O met you not with my true love
As by the way ye came?"

The ballad takes the form of a metrical dialogue, and the palmer replies :

" 'How should I know your true love
That have met many a one,
As I came from the holy land
That have both come and gone?'

" 'My love is neither white nor browne,
But as the heavens faire;
There is none hath her form divine,
Either in earth or ayre.'

" 'Such an one did I meet, good sir,
With an angelicke face;
Who like a nymphe, a queen appeared,
Both in her gait, her grace.'

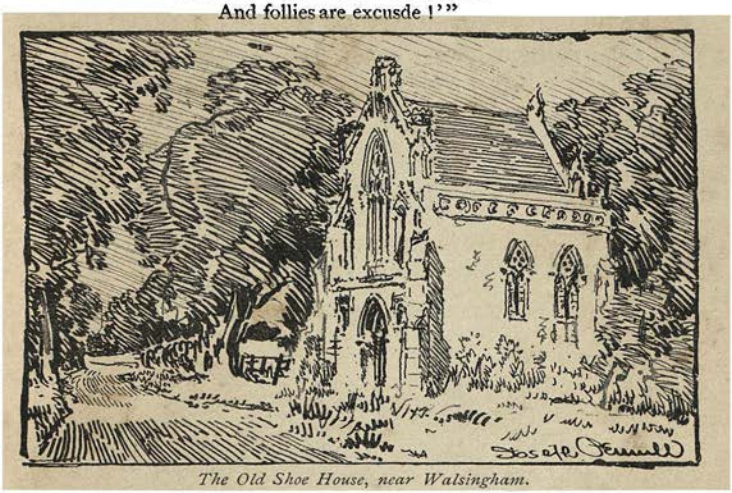
" 'Yes; she hath cleane forsaken me,
And left me all alone:
Who some time loved me as her life,
And called me her owne.'

" 'What is the cause she leaves thee thus,
And a new way doth take,
That some time loved thee as her life,
And thee her joy did make?'

" 'I that loved her all my youth
Growe old now as you see;
Love liketh not the falling fruit,
Nor yet the withered tree.

" 'For love is like a careless child,
Forgetting promise past:
He is blind, or deaf, whenere he list,
His faith is never fast.

" His fond desire is fickle found,
And yieldes a trusteless joye ;
Wonne with a world of toil and care
And lost ev'n with a toye.
" Such is the love of womankinde,
Or Love's fair name abusde,
Beneathe which many vaine desires
And follies are excusde !'"



The Old Shoe House, near Walsingham.

We are left to conjecture what effect a pilgrimage to Walsingham had on the fickle maid ; but Shenstone, who, in the intervals of garden-planning, wrote pastoral ballads, was not satisfied with the ending of this one, so he added the lines :

" But true love is a lasting fire
Which vowless vestals tend,
That burnes for ever in the soule,
And knowes nor change nor end."

Near the old Shoe House I turn sharply to the left, cross a rustic wooden footbridge, climb a hill, again turn, this time to the right, and am on the road which takes me directly to the fine old manor house at East Barsham, which comes in sight just as I reach the crest of a hill marked " dangerous to

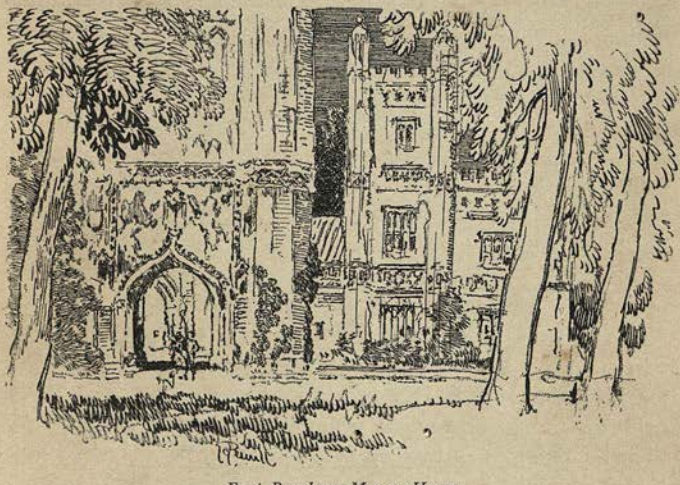
cyclists." It stands in the vale of the Stiffkey rivulet—a leafy sunlit vale—and when seen from the hill top is backed by fields, and a small wood which rises to the skyline. Although portions of it have been pulled down, it is still a grand example of the ornamental brickwork of the Tudor period, and I envy the farmer who enjoys the privilege of using its fine entrance-porch and living within its walls. If he has any eye for beauty, and the condition of his crops and stock is satisfactory, he ought to be a happy man; few farmers have such a stately

East Barsham.

home. When, on summer evenings, he smokes his pipe under the archway of his imposing gatehouse, he may well be forgiven if he looks upon himself as a lineal descendant of the Fermors, Calthorpes, and Le Stranges; at any rate he can boast that his predecessors here were entertainers of kings. Maybe he sleeps in the room which Henry VIII. occupied the night before he made his barefoot journey to Walsingham, and congratulates himself on the fact that he lives in days when that journey can be made in easier fashion. I hope, at least, that he

appreciates the responsibilities of his position. The man who lives in East Barsham Hall should consider himself the guardian and preserver of this fine old house.

After leaving East Barsham I lose myself, and spend nearly two hours in exploring an uninteresting, sparsely populated district, finding entertainment for a few minutes only in watching some sheep-shearers at work near a roadside farmstead. At length I find myself at Rudham, a prosperous-looking village grouped about a considerable green; and here I know that I



East Barsham Manor House.

am not far from New Houghton, or Houghton-in-the-Brake, the place I have been seeking during my perplexed wanderings. For Houghton Hall is the largest and most magnificent country house in Norfolk, and though it is not easily accessible I have made up my mind to find it. I wish, too, to enter that little church in the park, where rest so many generations of Walpoles, among them the great statesman who built the hall. As soon as I reach the confines of the park I get a good view of the hall through an avenue of fine old trees. A glance is sufficient

to confirm all that has been told me about its magnificence, and, at the same time, to reveal why it was that the Duke of Wellington chose to accept Stratfieldsaye rather than Houghton at the hands of a grateful nation. For it is, as Lady Hervey said more than a century ago, a "triste, melancholy, fine place," and its *tristesse* and melancholy are augmented by its being untenanted.

The Walpoles had been settled at Houghton nearly six hundred years when Sir Robert Walpole was born, the family having removed from the manor of Walpole in Marshland at the beginning of the twelfth century. Traces of the house in which he was born are still to be seen; and also of the foundations of a yet earlier hall. The present hall, designed by Ripley, the architect of the Admiralty buildings, was thirteen years in building. It was commenced in 1722, when a foundation stone was laid, bearing an inscription to the effect that Robert Walpole "placed me here," and a prayer that "after my master shall have lived long and happy, having come to mature age, both his children's children, and those who shall be born of them, being safe themselves, may protect me absolutely safe to the last day." No sooner was the house finished than its owner began to entertain on such a lavish scale that he speedily became renowned for his hospitality. His father had been content with the company of bucolic squires, who drank deeply and looked upon their host's house as Liberty Hall; the son, while he welcomed the neighbouring squires, also gathered around his board the great nobles and distinguished men of his time, and not of his own country only but of every continental nation. This, however, was in the days when he was at the height of his power. When he was driven from office and had little influence in affairs of state, he was glad to live a much quieter life in his stately country home. Then it was he set about making that famous collection of pictures, which, to England's irreparable loss, his nephew afterwards sold to Catherine of Russia, and which is now in the possession of the Czar at St. Petersburg. "My Lord," wrote

Horace Walpole, "is going to furnish and hang the picture gallery. Who could ever suspect any connection between painting and the wilds of Norfolk?"

Several of Horace Walpole's letters were written at Houghton; one written when the writer was contesting a Parliamentary election at Lynn contains several local references. "Here I am at Houghton! and alone!" he says, "in this spot where (except two hours last month) I have not been for sixteen years. Think, what a crowd of reflections! No; Gray, and forty churchyards,

Houghton Hall and Church

could not furnish so many; nay; I know one must feel them with greater indifference than I possess, to have patience to put them into verse. Here I am, probably for the last time of my life; every clock that strikes tells me I am an hour nearer yonder church—that church, into which I have not yet had courage to enter, where lies the mother on whom I doted, and who doted on me. There are two rival mistresses of Houghton, neither of whom ever wished to enjoy it—there too lies he who founded its greatness, to contribute to whose fall all Europe was embroiled. How wise a man at once and how weak! . . . . The

servants wanted to lay me in the great apartment, but I have chosen to sit in my father's little dressing-room, and am now by his escritoire. When I had drank tea, I strolled into the garden; they told me it was now called a *pleasure*-ground. In the days when all my soul was tuned to pleasure and vivacity, I hated Houghton and its solitude; Houghton, I know not what to call it, a monument of grandeur or ruin!"

Horace Walpole hated Houghton, too, in the days when he felt it his duty to visit Sir Robert here and help him to entertain the robust Norfolk squires who were always ready to share in the Houghton feastings and field sports. Norfolk scenery never appealed to him; Norfolk squires he despised, and they, no doubt, infinitely preferred his father to himself. He thought it one of the greatest of hardships that he should daily be compelled to meet men who were "mountains of roast beef . . . . roughly hewn out into the outlines of human form, like the giant-rock at Pratolino." He shuddered at seeing them brandish their carving knives; they suggested to him savages about to devour one another. "I'll swear," he wrote to John Chute, "I see no difference between a country gentleman and a sirloin. . . . Indeed the sirloin does not ask quite so many questions." But Houghton's reputation for hospitality had to be maintained so long as its owner had any end to gain by it. When the Grand Duke of Tuscany visited the place, and a great hunt was arranged for his entertainment, the number of sportsmen who set out from the hall was compared to an army on its march. In later days, however, the fallen minister was glad to find repose amid these rural scenes. Then he could say, "My flatterers here are all mutes. The oaks, the beeches, the chestnuts, seem to contend which best shall please the lord of the manor! They cannot deceive; they will not lie." It would have been a sad blow to him could he have known the fate in store for the art treasures—those works of Raffaelle, Rubens, Titian, Guido, and Murillo—in collecting which he found so much delight. Horace Walpole felt the loss of them

keenly. "I do not like even to think of it;" he wrote to Lady Ossory, when he heard of the sale of the pictures. "It is the most signal mortification to my idolatry for my father's memory, that it could receive. It is stripping the temple of his glory and of his affection. A madman excited by rascals has burnt his Ephesus. I must never cast a thought towards Norfolk more." But in his old age Horace was obliged to cast a good many thoughts towards Norfolk; for in his seventy-fifth year, at the death of the erratic earl who sold the pictures, he inherited the earldom of Orford and the Houghton estate. His feelings on hearing of his relative's death and realising what it meant to him may be appreciated by reading some lines he wrote at the time:

"An estate and an earldom at seventy-four;
Had I sought them or wished for them 'twould add one fear more—
That of making a countess when almost fourscore.
But fortune, who scatters her gifts out of season,
Though unkind to my limbs, has still left me my reason.
And whether she lowers or lifts me I'll try
In the plain simple style I have lived in, to die:
For ambition too humble, for meanness too high."

Houghton Hall has its ghost story; but it is sadly lacking in sensational details. All we know is that the ghost appeared to Prince George when he was a guest here and occupying the "Velvet State Bedchamber." Houghton was then in the possession of the Marquis of Cholmondeley, who was greatly concerned when his royal guest came down to breakfast in a very disturbed state of mind and urgently requested that he might, during the rest of his stay, sleep in some other apartment. The Prince was exceedingly reticent about what had disturbed him; but his disquietude was attributed to the restlessness of a certain "Browne Lady" who not only haunts Houghton, but was introduced into the neighbouring hall of Raynham when one of Sir Robert Walpole's sisters married a Marquis of Townshend.

A remarkable change has come over the Houghton estate since Sir Robert inherited it. Then, it is said, it contained only two forest trees, for which the rooks were continually fighting; now, although a thousand cedars were blown down in 1860, the park is one of the best-wooded in Norfolk, and some of its trees are of considerable size and great beauty. Fifty years ago four species of owls haunted the park, and there were rookeries almost everywhere; and this in spite of the fact that many walnuts had been cut down to furnish musket stocks for the troops fighting in the Peninsular War, and a large number of oaks felled for the use of the builders of the navy. To-day the vanished oaks, walnuts, and cedars are hardly missed; during several hours of the day it is almost possible to stroll through the park in the shade of its trees. In the course of my own strollings I come to the door of the little church whose tower was built by the great prime minister; under whose floor the builder of the tower rests with Horace Walpole, and Walpoles who lived and died at Houghton centuries before he was born. Its interior is plain almost to shabbiness; the fading hatchments on its walls are, with one exception, its sole adornments. The exception is a fine effigy of one of the priors of Cokesford, brought here from the priory church nearly four hundred years ago. The name of that prior, and why his effigy was brought to Houghton to rest above the ashes of the Walpoles, is unknown; but it has been suggested that he was a member of the family, whose history and name are forgotten. Strangely enough, no inscription denotes that Sir Robert is buried here; but in the parish register his death is thus recorded:— "A. D. 1745, the Right Hon. Robert, Earl of Orford, died March 18th, and was buried in ye 68th year of his age." Forty-six years later Horace Walpole died, and his body was brought here for burial. As with him the title of Earl of Orford became extinct, the family vault was then finally closed against sepulture. Once since then its silence has been disturbed. Then it was seen that, although the

church contains no memorial to Sir Robert, his coffin is inscribed with all his honours.

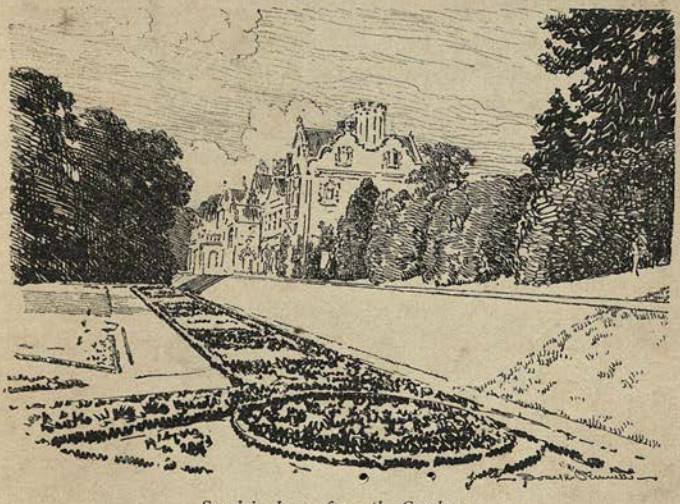
From the church I pass out into the deserted park, mentally contrasting the scenes amid which the Walpoles sleep their long sleep to those amid which they spent their lives. Statesman and literateur, ambassador and sailor are gathered here in this plain little church within a stone's-throw of their ancestral home. Their feet often trod this grass-grown foot-path leading up to the church door; so, too, have those of kings and princes and men of mark of many nations. Along the turf-bordered drive from the park gates to the hall Wellington and Blucher were drawn in their carriage by the Houghton villagers; the hero of the Nile strolled beneath these lofty trees. "Some mute inglorious Milton" and guiltless Cromwell, too, may have regularly traversed these smooth green glades; for until the year 1729 the village of Houghton clustered closely about the church, and was almost wholly contained within the park. In that year, however, Sir Robert began to build new cottages outside the gates, and as each was completed a family of his humble tenants was compelled to leave its old home and migrate beyond the borders of the park. This breaking of ties caused much grief to some of the old folk who loved their little homesteads, and is said to have supplied Goldsmith with the theme of his *Deserted Village*. Such, at any rate, in spite of Lissoy's claims to be "Sweet Auburn," has been the belief of several holders of Houghton; and Horace Walpole's dislike of the poet has been attributed to the latter's condemnation of a pride which, "at pleasure's lordly call," saw without regret a "smiling long-frequented village fall." If there be any truth in this suggestion, it may be said that poetic justice has been meted out; for instead of the village, Houghton Hall is now deserted, and its only voice is the echo which comes from its western wall—that hidden spirit which lurks

> "beneath the columns grey
> That deck the stately Hall."

The post-mistress who lives in one of the uniform grey cottages Sir Robert raised for the accommodation of his evicted tenants, tells me that if I "keep to" the telephone wire which skirts the park it will bring me to Sandringham, and within a short distance of the Prince of Wales's Norfolk home; so although my aerial guide soon conducts me on to a rough heathland road which renders walking my only possible mode of progression, I follow the good lady's direction. This I do with the less hesitation because I know that when I reach the Prince's pleasance I shall have the delight of riding over some of the best-made roads in the county. Meanwhile, I am even less happy among the sharp flints of the heath road than the rabbits which my approach sends scurrying to the shelter of the woods; so, after plodding painfully along for some time under a broiling sun, I am glad to rest awhile on the side of an ancient British barrow which the rabbits have abandoned. Here, where the young green bracken leaves are unfolding, and pretty little sand lizards are basking with an open eye for unwary insects, it were easy to fall asleep and dream troubled dreams in which Neolithic men and eighteenth century statesmen are strangely intermingled—the larks' songs have a drowsy influence, and the distant crooning of the wood doves is like a lullaby—but a shadeless mound is hardly the place for a siesta, so I am soon astir again. Then, it is not long before the country through which I am travelling undergoes a great change. Wild heathland gives way to fruitful fields and smiling pastures; the rough heath track is succeeded by a smooth level road bordered by close-clipped hedgerows. Presently the model buildings on the Princess's farm are seen, with every door open to exactly the same angle, as though every stall must receive an identical amount of air and light; a little way beyond them I get glimpses of gardens which are all that money and horticultural skill and knowledge can make them. By this time I am riding along such an excellent road that I can hardly persuade myself to alight in order to see more of

the beauties of the Prince's estate; but on reaching the famous Norwich Gates which Norfolk presented to its royal squire I realise that I am making too hasty progress through this lovely demesne.

North Norfolk owes much of its charm to the owners of its large estates, who, in many instances, have transformed barren wastes, possessing the charm of wildness only, into well-wooded plateaux and pleasant park lands. At Holkham a



Sandringham, from the Garden.

wilderness has been made to blossom as the rose; at Houghton a large treeless tract has become one of the most leafy and verdant; and at Sandringham, where not long ago there were thousands of acres of wild warren, the haunt of the stone curlew and the lapwing, there are now the loveliest gardens and best-stocked game preserves in the county. On the Prince's estate, however, the rich colour and wild beauty of the high warrens have not been wholly obliterated; there are even now wide tracts of breezy heathland at Dersingham which

have altered little since the days when they were the haunt of those droves of great bustards which the Hunstanton Hall huntsmen pursued and "kylled with ye crossbowe." Indeed, the royal demesne is remarkable for the variety of its natural features. Within its six parishes are not only wood, heath, and park lands, but pastures, fens, salt-marshes, and a wild-fowl haunted seashore. From the crest of the uplands known as Sandringham Heights this variety of scenery is strikingly apparent, and the sea view is one of the finest on the coast, the tower of Boston church being discernible on clear days across the wide waters of the Wash. To-day a pale blue haze, tremulous as wind-rippled silk, hides the Lincolnshire coast; but on the Sandringham hills the air is clear and dry. It is fragrant, too, with the scent of the pine woods through which the road winds, and in whose recesses jays and daws are screaming and chattering so shrilly and loudly that the doves' crooning is drowned in the clamour. But the pheasants make themselves heard, and the cocks' harsh challenge comes every minute from amid the undergrowth of withered fern.

Forty years have passed since Sandringham came into the possession of the Prince of Wales. During that time a new hall has arisen in the place of the one once occupied by the Hon. C. Spencer Cowper, and, as I have said, the attractiveness of the estate has been much enhanced. While the Princess has established a model farm, the Prince has built a model village, the old houses of West Newton, a hamlet directly south of Sandringham, having been replaced by new and far better cottages. Immediately around the hall a number of charming houses are erected for the convenience of the household and visitors; splendid gardens are laid out; an extensive artificial lake is added to the park; and the grounds are beautified by the planting of rare and fine coniferæ. The churches on the estate have been carefully restored under the direction of eminent architects, and adorned by royal gifts. Indeed, it may be said, without intruding upon the private life of the royal

squire of Sandringham, that he has, during his residence here, been an ideal lord of the manor. He has done so much for the district and its inhabitants that visitors, who on one day in the week, when the royal family is not in residence, are permitted to view the grounds, and who at all times can explore that part of the estate beyond the park walls, are liable to forget that the neighbourhood has interesting associations unconnected with its royal landlord. One event which occurred near here many centuries ago ought not, however, to be forgotten. It was the building of the first East Anglian Christian church at Babingley, a small parish on the road from Sandringham to Lynn. Felix of Burgundy was its founder; and the present church, which stands a little to the right of the road, on some marshland near Castle Rising, is believed to occupy the site of the rude edifice in which assembled that seventh century teacher's first converts. Nothing in the existing church suggests its ancient foundation; but there is little doubt that the hamlet is the Babinkelia mentioned in old chronicles, and some low hills in the neighbourhood are still known as the "Christian Hills." "It is easy to imagine," remarks a writer who devoted considerable time to research into the early history of the Sandringham estate, "what a striking change the arrival of Felix must have caused, even in the scantily-peopled villages of the coast. The inhabitants of Babingley and Sandringham . . . . . wont to graze their cattle on the hills of Wolferton in order that they might be sacrificed . . . . in the heathen temple of the locality, mused with wonder and curiosity on the simple buildings, the humane practice, the spiritual worship of the new religion."

The villages around Sandringham are noted for their interesting churches. Those of Dersingham and Snettisham are especially remarkable; while that of Heacham, a hamlet about two miles from Hunstanton, is notable because it contains several monuments to the Rolfes, who have held the manor for several centuries. A member of this family

married Princess Pocahontas, the Virginia princess who visited England and appeared at the Court of James I. The story of this unfortunate princess has often been told; but I do not remember ever having seen attention drawn to the fact that East Anglians were intimately concerned in the shaping of her destiny.

Nearly three hundred years ago, when love of adventure and greed of gain caused the thoughts of a large number of Englishmen to turn towards the new colony of Virginia, Henry Spelman, a son of the famous Elizabethan antiquary, Sir Henry Spelman (who was a Norfolk man), was one of a party of emigrants who set sail for the New World. From his own account of his experiences it appears that he arrived at Jamestown in October, 1609, and a few days later was made prisoner by the Potomac Indians. It was his own belief that he was sold to his captors by Captain John Smith, the Governor of Jamestown, who was anxious that some Englishman of his acquaintance should learn the red men's language; but as Spelman was little more than fourteen years old at the time it is not unlikely that he misunderstood the Governor's motives in leaving him in the Indians' hands. At any rate, he had no difficulty in escaping to Jamestown; and almost immediately afterwards he voluntarily went, with two companions, to live in the chief Powhatan's wigwams. There, when his life was threatened, he found a guardian angel in the beautiful Indian maiden, Pocahontas, daughter of Powhatan. This princess also seems to have protected Captain John Smith, who, on his return to England, affirmed that she had often saved his life. East Anglians apparently found especial favour in her eyes. Spelman was a Norfolk man; Captain John Smith was born in Lincolnshire; and John Rolfe, who, in 1613, became her husband, she being then eighteen years of age, was a native of the village of Heacham.

This John Rolfe had accompanied Sir Thomas Dale to Virginia subsequent to the latter's appointment to the governor-

ship of the colony. Soon after his arrival Pocahontas was captured by the English, brought to Jamestown, and there held hostage for certain Englishmen who were prisoners in her father's hands. Her beauty attracted the young emigrant, who, on finding, as had Smith and Spelman, she had a tender spot in her heart for Englishmen—more particularly East Anglians —applied to the governor for permission to make her his wife. This request was at once granted, young Rolfe being a favourite with the Governor, who may also have hoped to bring about more friendly relations between the white and red men by the alliance; and the chief Powhatan's consent having been obtained the marriage took place at Jamestown. There, Rolfe and his "royal" wife remained three years, and then set sail for England, where, their story having preceded them, they found themselves the centre of considerable interest—in fact, the "lions" of a London season. Pocahontas might well, had her life been spared, have become a court favourite. She was presented to King James and his Queen, and soon learnt to adapt herself to the conditions of London society; while her little son, who inherited his mother's grace and beauty, was greatly admired. But it was soon noticed that her health was failing, and her husband at once determined to take her back to her native woods. The variableness of the English climate no doubt accounted for her weakness; but among those persons for whom the story of her life had a fascination were some who attributed her decline to the shock she received at unexpectedly meeting Captain John Smith, to whom, rumour would have it, she had given her heart before she met John Rolfe, and whom she believed to be dead. Whatever may have been the cause of her illness, she was fated never again to set foot on her native soil. She died on board the ship which was to have carried her back to America, on the eve of its sailing. She was buried in a Greenwich church which has long been burnt down; and her husband went back to Virginia alone, leaving his little son to be educated by a relative in

England. Some years later the son followed his father to America, where he married, and, when he died, left an only daughter. From her several well-known American families claim descent, and are proud of the strain of Indian blood derived from Powhatan's lovely daughter. Whether Pocahontas spent much, or any, of her brief life in England at her husband's ancestral home by the grey North Sea, I cannot say; but her marriage has inseparably associated her with Heacham, where the Rolfes are still in possession of their ancient manor. It is sad to think that when she died her body was not laid to rest in the shadow and silence of her native woods, or, at least, among her husband's people in the little Norfolk church by the sea.

Lynn from the River.

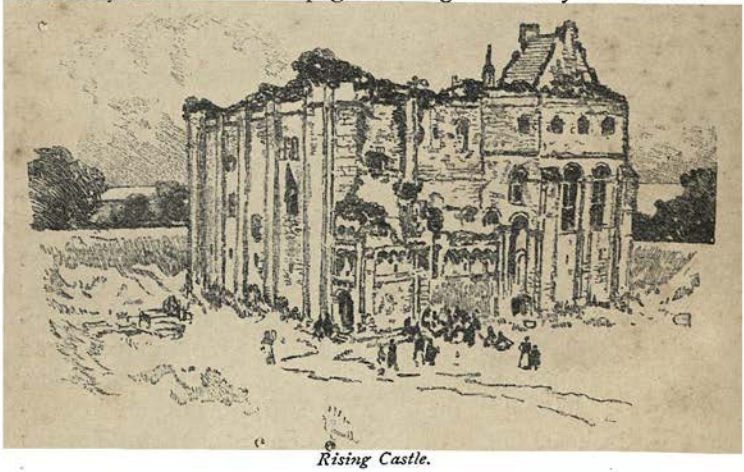
CHAPTER IX

CASTLE RISING, KING'S LYNN, AND MARSHLAND

WITH the knowledge of having entered one of the finest cycling districts in England, and the prospect of the weather "holding," as they say in Norfolk, fine, I am in a mood to appreciate Castle Rising even if the decayed little town possessed no more striking attraction than its old wayside cross. Rising, however, can boast of the finest ruined Norman castle in Norfolk, and when I climb to the top of the ancient earthworks which here, as elsewhere in the county, were chosen as the site for a baronial stronghold, I have no inclination to hasten on to Lynn. For before me is a massive Norman tower, rich in the characteristic arch-work and mouldings of the period from which it dates. Like Framlingham Castle, it scarcely seems a ruin; indeed, some parts of it are still inhabited; but the gateway which leads to the inner bailey has fallen into formless decay. The deep fosse, too, presents no such unscalable sides to the modern visitor as it did to the twelfth century invader: tall ash trees are rooted in the high heaped banks, in the midst of fragrant blossoming hawthorns. On the grass-

grown roof of the keep a colony of jackdaws and starlings is established, and from the noise it makes must be holding high carnival. From the neighbourhood of the birds' nesting-holes I get a wide view of the district through which I have travelled since I left the Prince's pleasance, and of the misty flats between Rising and the sea.

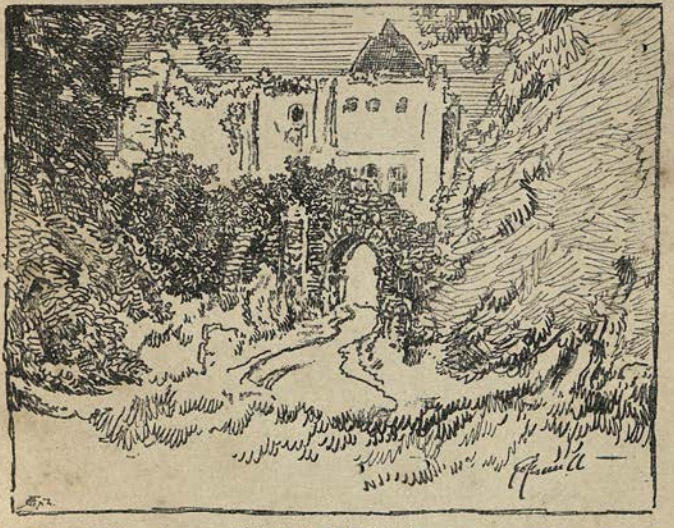
If any place in Norfolk should be haunted by an unrestful spirit it is this old Castle of the D'Albinis. Only one name indelibly inscribed in the pages of English history is associated



Rising Castle.

with it; but the name of Isabella, the "She-Wolf of France," is sufficiently infamous to give the castle unenviable fame so long as one stone of its walls rests upon another. Edward the Second's queen, the most beautiful woman of her time, was also, if we may believe the old chroniclers, one of the most depraved; she is one of the few historical characters for whom modern writers have found no tender word. Even the most daring romancer would hesitate before attributing to high motives any action of the weakest Plantagenet's unfaithful queen. And yet, is it not possible that if some contemporary

chronicler with keen insight had got a glimpse into the mind of that dark-featured daughter of Philip the Fair when she first set foot on English soil, he might have found there something to make him tremble for her future, and, in after years, help him to set down with some touch of sympathy, yet faithfully, the story of her stormy career? Who can tell what sad secrets were locked in her breast when the idle monarch, to whom she had been espoused when only four years old, brought



Gateway, Rising Castle.

her to a land of strangers?—what recollections of youthful dreams, now rudely dispelled, haunted her brain and hardened her heart? But these are things which historians are content to leave to sentimentalists such as the one who now stands musing in the shadow of Rising Castle walls. I cannot—and would not if I could—still the throb of sympathy my heart gives when I picture the lonely woman sitting at one of these old Norman windows, gazing out over the dreary marshes

stretching westward to the sea. What a life was hers to look back upon! What awful memories must have peopled the misty flats with gloomy phantoms and racked a mind already maddened by passion and grief! How the faces of her erstwhile ruffianly associates, Maltravers, Gournay, and Ogle, must have grinned at her through the twilight, their taunting glances reminding her of that night when the people of Berkeley were aroused from sleep by shrieks which came from that grim castle where her imprisoned husband was being done to death by brutal hands and unnameable horrors! And who can doubt that among her spectral visitors was one for whom she had brought dishonour upon herself; with whom, maybe, she had planned to bring about the death of two English kings? They had both received just punishment for their many misdeeds; and from her castle prison here Queen Isabella's thoughts must often have been centred on that other castle at Nottingham, where her punishment began. For it was there that her son, weary of her wickedness and treachery, came to seize her co-conspirator and paramour. Stow has told us how she was awakened in the night by Montague and his companions, who had entered the castle by a subterranean passage from the precipice of Leen.

"On a certain night the King and his friends were brought by torchlight through a secret way underground, beginning far from the castle, till they came even to the queen's chamber, which they by chance found open. They being armed with naked swords in their hands, went forward, leaving the king armed without the chamber door, lest his mother should espy him. They entered in, slew Sir Hugh Turpinton who resisted them, and to John Neville they gave a deadly wound. From thence they went to the queen-mother, whom they found with the Earl of March, just ready to go to bed; and having seized the said earl, they led him into the hall, the queen following, crying out, 'Fair son, have mercy on the gentle Mortimer!' For she knew her son was there, though she saw

him not. She likewise entreated Montague and his people to do no harm to the person of Mortimer, because he was a worthy knight, her dear friend, and well-beloved cousin."

That eventful night saw the power and influence of the "She-Wolf of France" brought to naught. Soon afterwards, by the advice of his council, the young King "ordered his mother to be confined in a goodly castle, and gave her plenty of ladies to wait upon her, as well as knights and squires of honour." When the curtain again rises and reveals her, she is at Rising, forbidden "ever to go out or show herself abroad, except at certain times, and when any shows were exhibited in the court of the castle;" but after a time these restrictions were removed, and Queen Isabella, though Froissart says she spent her life "meekly" at the castle, went almost wherever she wished to go and did very much as she liked. She even made a pilgrimage to Walsingham, which may have helped to abate the poignancy of her remorse, for she was afterwards disposed to visit London, and when her son, Edward III., came to Rising she was active in ordering sport and festivities for his entertainment. So, after all, great sympathy with her lot may be excessive or gratuitous. She did not, as is often stated, die at Rising, but at Hertford; and it is curious that, as in the case of Anne Boleyn, local tradition asserts that she is buried in Norfolk. For the Salle story has its counterpart here; and fifty years ago a stone in Rising church, bearing the words "Isabella Regina," was pointed out as marking the site of her grave. But there is more likelihood that when the "She-Wolf's" stormy heart was at last stilled she was laid beside Mortimer in the Greyfriars church in London.

Late Norman work is very much in evidence in Rising church, which possesses some remarkable and beautiful arcading on its west front. The church dates from the early part of the twelfth century, but has some fine Early English additions, notably an arch in the south wall of the tower, and the east window. Fault has been found with the high-pitched

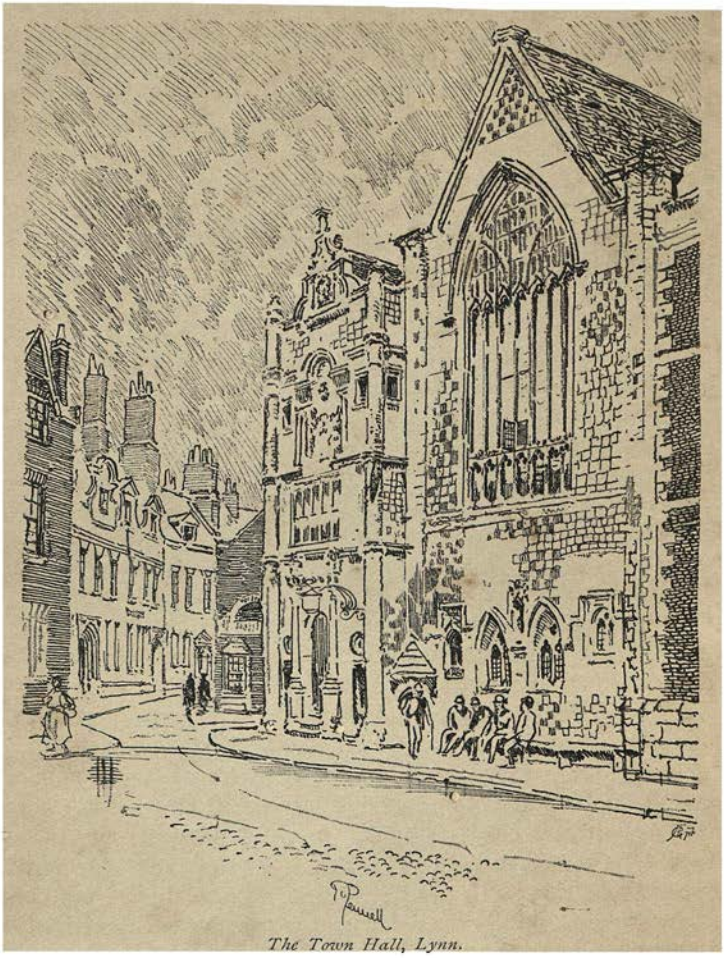
or "saddle-back" roof with which Salvin replaced the old parapet of the tower; but, as has been pointed out, authority is not wanting, even in England, for such a substitution, while in Normandy and the Rhine valley similar roofs are not at all uncommon. To the student of Norman architecture Rising church is almost as interesting as Rising Castle. Its surroundings are very picturesque. The churchyard, bordered by fine ash trees and sycamores, overlooks on one side the village green with its fine old wayside cross; on another, the quaint Bede House. This old almshouse, which bears a superficial resemblance to the Fishermen's Hospital in Yarmouth market-place, was founded in the reign of James I. by Henry Howard, the eccentric Earl of Northampton. Its inmates, on Sundays and certain holidays and saints' days, still wear the Howard badge affixed to the quaint garb of the Jacobean period. On Sundays, when the old women totter across the road to church, their high-peaked hats and scarlet cloaks give them a very striking appearance; when one sees them enter or emerge from the curious old Bede House it is strange to think that neither the house nor the costume of its inmates have altered since the days of the Stuarts. The conditions under which old women are admitted into the almshouse are somewhat curious. Every woman must prove herself to be of "an honest life and conversation, religious, grave, and discreet, able to read (if such an one may be had), a single woman, her place to be void upon marriage, to be fifty years of age at least, no common beggar, harlot, scold, drunkard, haunter of taverns, inns, or alehouses." On being found guilty of "atheism, heresy, blasphemy, faction in the hospital, injury, or disgracing the assistants, neglect of duty, or misbehaviour in the performance of it, or anything to the hurt or prejudice of the hospital," she is to be expelled. It is also stipulated that she must hear prayers read by the governess at nine every morning and three every afternoon, say certain prayers morning and evening in her own apartments, go to church morning and

evening on Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and holidays, and not go out of the Bede House without permission. I cannot ascertain whether all these conditions are still complied with; but some of the old women are certainly leaving the church when I enter it, though no service is going on there.

Rising, every one must admit, is a charming village. Probably it is far more picturesque to-day than when it was a flourishing borough, returning two members to Parliament, and possessing a mayor who was one of the most important civic dignitaries in East Anglia. A local rhyme asserts that

> "Rising was a sea-port town
> When Lynn was but a marsh;
> Now Lynn it is a sea-port,
> And Rising fares the worse."

As the village is only about two miles from the sea, and the land stretching seaward simply marshland which must in earlier times have been submerged, the statement made in this old rhyme is not so incredible as some similar ones respecting other places. For many years before its disenfranchisement, however, Rising was a very small town—a fact which gives point to some stories told of one of its later mayors, whose name was Wakefield, and who was a bit of a "character." It is said that one day he set out for Lynn with a load of hay. On the way a truss fell from the load, and Wakefield appealed to a passer-by for assistance in replacing it. The man addressed, instead of rendering willing aid, drew himself up to rather more than his normal height and indignantly asked whether Wakefield knew he was addressing the mayor of Lynn. "Man," replied Wakefield, "that don't make no odds. I'm the mayor of Castle Rising! Now will you lend me a hand?" On another occasion the bearer of some election despatches arrived in hot haste at Rising and asked for the mayor. Wakefield was engaged in the exercise of his "high calling," which happened to be that of a thatcher; he was thatching a barn. On hearing that his presence was required, he sent a message to the



The Town Hall, Lynn.

despatch-bearer to the effect that, "If it's John Wakefield, the thatcher, he wants to see, I'll come down at once ; but if it's the mayor of Castle Rising he has business with, he must come up

here to me!" Amusing tales are told, too, of how, in the days when Rising had so decayed that only two or three persons in the town were qualified for membership of its Corporation, those individuals would meet and gravely elect each other in turn Mayor of the borough.

I arrive at Lynn on a market day, when its main thoroughfares are scenes of bustling activity, and its inn yards resound with the clatter of horses' hoofs. In spite of the situation of their town, the natives of Lynn never impress me as being typical fen folk, probably because Lynn is a port and its people therefore somewhat cosmopolitan. But to-day there are plenty of stalwart men, buxom women, and robust-looking youths and maidens from the Fenland in the Lynn streets, around the inns, and hurrying in and out of the shops. Towards evening I see many of them starting for their homes in the hamlets of Marshland, and am struck with the fine condition of the horses they drive in their high market-carts. No doubt, the level roads of Fenland have much to do with this, for the work on them, and on the Fenland fields, is far less hard and wearing than on the uplands. A glance at the noisy cattle mart is enough to prove that the beasts there are from the lush-grassed lowland pastures, where man and beast now reap the benefit of the old-time fenmen's arduous labours in reclaiming sea-soaked swamps and oozy meres. True, the cattle mart here is small compared with that on Norwich Castle Hill; but then, Norwich is in the centre of Norfolk's wide agricultural and grazing lands, while Lynn, though it is some distance from the mouth of the Ouse, may be reckoned a coast town. It is a town won from the waves —won long ago, in the days when vast tracts in the south of Lincolnshire, and the west of Norfolk, a great deal of Cambridgeshire, and considerable portions of Suffolk, Huntingdonshire, and Northamptonshire, were submerged by, or subject to incursions of, the sea. Probably it was the Romans who first showed the Britons how to fight the sea. Many centuries

before the Dutchmen came to instruct Englishmen in the matter of dyke cutting, proprætors set the conquered Iceni to work at raising high banks along the coast to protect the low-lands from the flooding tides. So in course of time the fens became a "fat" land famous for the quality of its crops and cattle; and the chief port on the borders of the fens grew in size and importance.

Of the disastrous floods which wrought havoc in the district, often undoing in a day or night the work of years, I shall have

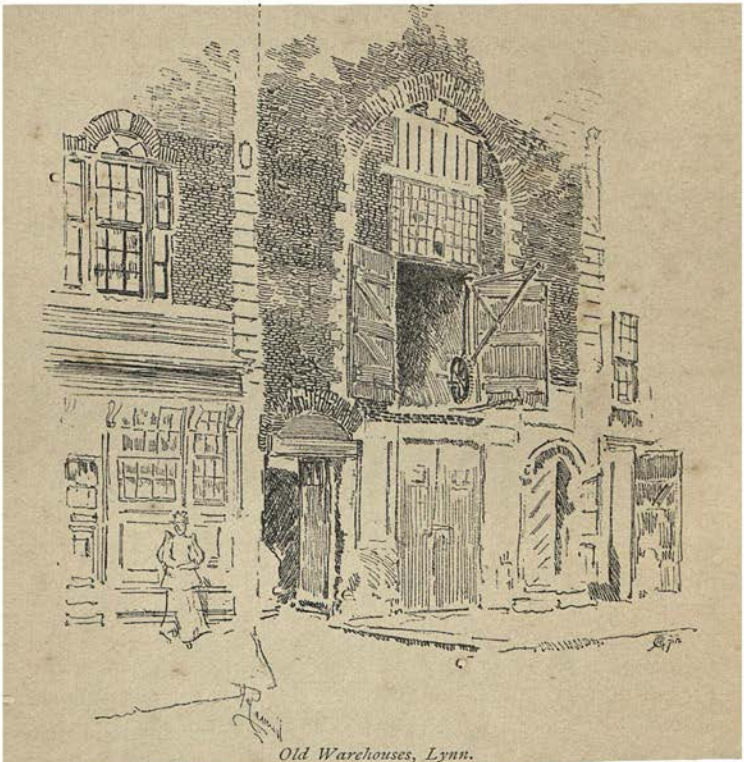
The River at Lynn.

something to say when I am crossing the Fenland. Sea's sieges innumerable Lynn has experienced and withstood; but for the moment it is with a land siege, supported by a more or less effective blockade, that I wish to deal. This Siege of Lynn is not famous in history; the loss of life it entailed was, from a military point of view, inconsiderable; still, it was, no doubt, an event which attracted much attention, more especially in East Anglia, at the time it occurred. That was during the Civil War of Charles the First's reign; when, on the outbreak of hostilities between King and Parliament, Lynn was the only

town in the two easternmost counties to openly declare itself in favour of the Royalist cause. It did so when Parliament, fearing a Royalist force might invade Norfolk by way of Lincolnshire, ordered the people of Lynn to fortify their town. Apparently the necessary precautions against invasion were promptly taken; but when they were completed the Parliament leaders were astonished to hear that the new defences were being utilised by local Royalists to keep the Parliament troops at bay. In fact, the Royalist organ, *Mercurius Aulicus*, announced in unmistakable terms that Lynn had declared for the King.

For a time hostilities were confined to occasional skirmishes, the result, in all probability, of the efforts of the Parliamentarians to ascertain the strength of the Lynn garrison. At any rate, after losing a few men and taking a few prisoners, Captain Poe, who commanded the besiegers, was able to inform the Deputy Lieutenants of Essex that his antagonists were armed with over a thousand muskets and had a plentiful supply of ammunition. But in spite of this he did not believe the town could hold out more than five days, providing prompt steps were taken to prevent the arrival of relief by sea. His own force, however, proved too small to bring about a capitulation; he had to content himself with holding the bridges over the Ouse until reinforcements, to the number of some 4,000 horse and foot, under the Earl of Manchester, Colonel Cromwell, and Colonel Sir Miles Hobart, arrived on the scene and occupied Old Lynn, on the west side of the river. Having gained this advantage, the Parliamentarians commenced a desultory bombardment, but without effecting anything more serious than frightening a congregation at St. Margaret's church by dropping a sixteen-pound shot in their midst. More than that was necessary to shake the Lynn Loyalists' faith in themselves and their ability to hold the enemy in check: even when news came that a further force of 4,000 horse and 7,000 foot would presently be available to increase the besiegers' strength, it was confidently asserted that

Manchester might "as soon raise his good father from the dead as force his entrance into Lynn, so strongly is it fortified." Day after day fighting went on. Once a part of the garrison sallied forth to Gaywood, a suburban village, and set fire to



Old Warehouses, Lynn.

two houses, but was driven back with a loss of ten men. An old letter quoted by Mr. R. H. Mason in his *History of Norfolk* informs us that the Earl of Manchester three times summoned the town to yield, but was answered "obstinately and in a hostile way," one of the replies being signed with

twenty-five names, including those of the Mayor, Recorder, and Steward, and containing a message to the effect that "we send our names lest you should forget to plunder us when you have taken our Towne." The letter goes on to state that "some of the Townsmen issued out and began to cut the banks to let out the water, whereof seven were slaine by the besiegers, and set up naked against a gate neare the Towne, whom the Lynners may see, but dare not come out to bury them. Some of the besiegers went up to the wall of the Towne, and brought away thirty-six Cowes, without losse or hurt, though many guns were shot at them. One ship is gotten in to their reliefe, thought to be laden with men and provisions. The Lynners shot at her (nothing but powder) as if she had been an enemy. She vailed bonnet to the Parliament's ships as a friend, and slylie slipt into the haven before she was discovered. But now all passages are stopt by Sea and Land, so that there is no getting out or in. The pipes that carried them fresh water are cut off, and the fresh river by Kettle Mills is turned another way."

At length preparations were made for an attack in force upon the town, under cover of a battery placed on a hill—or what in the neighbourhood of Lynn passes for a hill—on the west side of the port. Boats were provided for crossing the river, ladders for scaling the walls; notice was given the garrison so that women and children might be sent to a place of safety. But by this time the Royalists had realised that theirs was a hopeless case. Assistance promised them by the Earl of Newcastle had not arrived; the other Royalist leaders were seemingly unable to render any effectual aid. So the town capitulated, and the Earl of Manchester, whose after career was a remarkable one, gained his first military success. In recognition of their gallantry the defenders of the town were granted special privileges. "Gentlemen strangers" who had fought with the Royalists were permitted to depart, every man with his horse, sword, and pistols; all prisoners were set

at liberty; no townsman was molested for anything he had done in defence of the town. As a set off against these concessions, the ordnance, arms, and ammunition had to be delivered up to the Earl, and to prevent plundering the town had to pay the sum of ten shillings to every private soldier under his command, and a fortnight's pay to every officer. So the consequences of the Siege of Lynn should not have been very serious to either side; apparently there was little reason why, so far as local differences were concerned, Royalists and Parliamentarians should not have lived happily together ever afterwards. But unfortunately the sum the "Lynners" were ordered to pay "to prevent plundering" was not the total cost of their supporting the Royalist cause. Parliament, recognising the importance of the place as a seaport, determined that a strong garrison should be maintained here, and the inhabitants were made responsible for its maintenance. This entailed such heavy expense that Lynn, already suffering from a considerable decrease of trade, was reduced to a "miserable condition." At least, so said one of its Parliamentary representatives; but Parliamentary representatives are somewhat given to exaggerating the woes of their constituents.

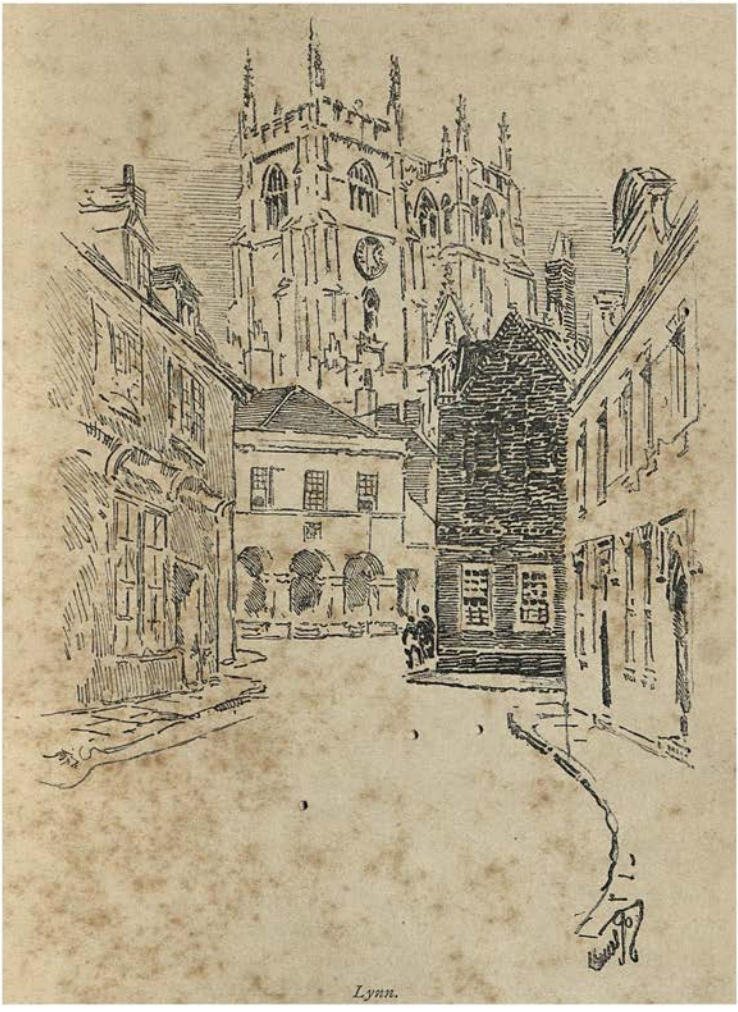
During the year following that of the siege, evidence came to light of a Royalist plot to again get possession of the town. Few particulars of this plot have been handed down to us; but, judging from the little known of it, it seems to have been a very silly affair, reflecting small credit on its originator. This worthy was Roger le Strange, of Hunstanton, whose father, Sir Hamon le Strange, a Royalist who after "strict soliloquy . . . . . had reconciled his opinion to the sense of Parliament," was Governor of Lynn at the time of the siege. Roger appears to have represented to the King that there were still in Lynn persons willing and anxious to secure the town for the Royalists. Upon hearing this, the King granted him a commission which provided that, in the event of the plot succeeding, he should be made Governor of the town, receive considerable pecuniary aid,

and be furnished with a sufficient force to hold the town against its enemies. Armed with this commission he set out for Norfolk, and established himself at Appleton Hall, the seat of one of the Pastons, about six miles from Lynn. There, he unfolded his plan, whatever it may have been, to Captain Thomas and an individual named Haggard, whom he believed to be ardent supporters of the King's cause. They suggested he should provide them with at least two hundred men to commence operations. This he was quite unable to do; and his co-conspirators then, to his great consternation, revealed themselves in their true colours and arrested him. He was taken to London, tried by martial law, and condemned to death. In response to a petition he addressed to Parliament, an order was issued delaying the execution; and before further steps were taken he succeeded in escaping from custody and fled to the Continent. There he remained until the Restoration, and, no doubt, decided to make no more attempts at conspiracy. On his return to England he started the *Public Intelligencer*, and afterwards the *Observator*, ending his days as a knight who was content to wield no other weapon than the pen.

Lynn's principal church, St. Margaret's, was founded by Herbert de Lozinga, the first Norman bishop of East Anglia, under circumstances I have mentioned in connection with Yarmouth church. Little of the original building now remains, and the church is chiefly remarkable for containing two of the finest sepulchral brasses in England. They are of Flemish workmanship and date from the middle of the fourteenth century. The more notable is that of Robert Braunche, dated 1364. It represents a feast, conjectured to be either a banquet given to Edward III. by Braunche during his mayoralty, or the feast of St. Margaret, on Lynn fair day. Cotman, in his *Sepulchral Brasses of Norfolk*, says of the Braunche brass: "Under the three principal figures is represented a feast that for the splendour of the table and the company, the band of music, and the attendance, might pass for some grand anniversary

celebrated in this wealthy town, perhaps the feast of St. Margaret, their patroness, on the fair day granted them by King John; or perhaps the Mayor's feast when Braunche held that office in 1349 or 1359. Among the delicacies on this splendid table one sees the peacock, that noble bird, the food of lovers and the meat of lords." Female attendants are shown bringing in the peacocks; one of the guests, in his anxiety to obtain possession of a bird, is straddling across the table, and apparently being remonstrated with for his bad manners by his immediate neighbour at the board. The other brass is that of Adam de Walsoken, a wealthy merchant of the town. It is dated 1349. Unfortunately it is much worn, having originally been placed on the floor of the chancel; but the figures of the merchant and his wife are sufficiently well preserved to reveal details of the costumes of the period in which they were engraved. The twelve Apostles and prophets (some authorities say they are saints and martyrs) are also represented, and beneath them what is supposed to be an apple-gathering or vintage harvest on a monastic farm. The brasses are now preserved on a stone platform at the base of the south-western tower, where their remarkable workmanship is not easily seen or appreciated. Formerly there was another equally fine brass here; but it was taken up many years ago and sold for about five shillings!

In the middle of the eighteenth century Dr. Burney was organist of St. Margaret's church. During the time he held the post his daughter Fanny was born. The doctor's salary, we are told, was a hundred pounds a year—a good one for the times in which he lived, more especially as his duties were sufficiently light to allow of his undertaking the musical instruction of private pupils. He was the music master of the principal Norfolk families, among them the Cokes and Wodehouses, Walpoles and Townshends, to whose country seats, at Holkham, Kimberley, Houghton, and Raynham, he would ride on his old mare Peggy, a creature of such leisurely gait



Lynn.

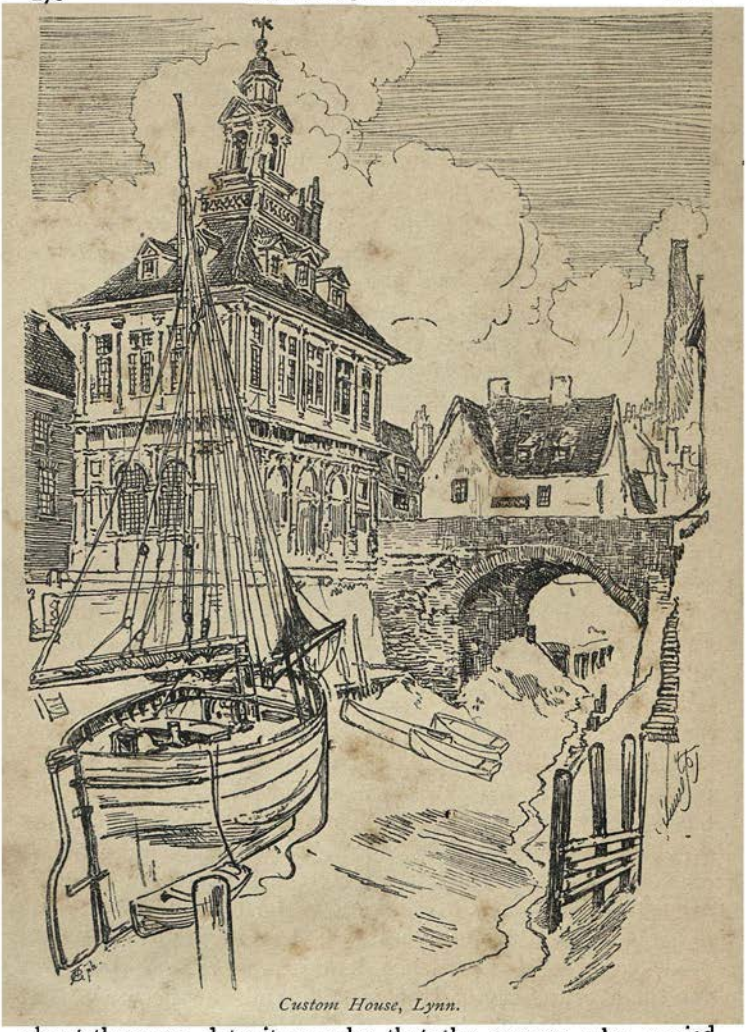
that he had no difficulty in reading an Italian book, with the aid of a dictionary, as he jogged along the Norfolk roads. No

doubt he was glad of the opportunities those journeys afforded him of gaining access to some of the fine private libraries of Norfolk, where he might obtain material for his *History of Music*, to which, during his life at Lynn, he devoted much of his time. Fanny was too young then to accompany him into the society in which she was afterwards to shine, and as Horace Walpole's election "chairing" occurred some months after the Burneys left the town it is improbable that she made the acquaintance of the fastidious *dilettante* until they met, in after years, in London. Then both father and daughter gained Horace's favour: he pronounced the former "lively and agreeable," and of the latter said she was made up of sense and modesty, so that there was no room in her for affectation or pretension—a judgment which would have more weight if it came from a less affected and pretentious critic. I sometimes wonder whether that Norfolk heiress of whom the "prince of letter-writers" tells us was one of the Doctor's pupils. Horace met her at Houghton. "The young gentlewoman," he says, "had not been three hours in the house, and that for the first time in her life, before she notified her talent for singing, and invited herself up stairs, to Lady Mary's harpsichord, where, with a voice like thunder, and with as little harmony, she sang to nine or ten people, for an hour. 'Was ever nymphe like Rossymonde?'—no, *d'honneur*. We told her she had a very strong voice. 'Why, Sir, my master says it is nothing to what it was!' My dear child (Horace is writing to one of his girl friends) she brags abominably; if it had been a thousandth degree louder you must have heard it at Florence."

Seeing that Houghton is so near Lynn it is not surprising that the name of Walpole occurs often in the history of the town. In the gothic Guildhall near St. Margaret's church is a portrait of Sir Robert Walpole, who, like certain of his ancestors, represented the borough in Parliament, and Horace was also member for Lynn for some years. In one of his letters, written immediately after his election, he says, "I was

kept at Lynn till yesterday morning . . . . Think of me, the subject of a mob, who was scarce ever before in a mob, addressing them in the town hall, riding at the head of two thousand people through such a town as Lynn, dining with above two hundred of them, amid bumpers, huzzas, songs, and tobacco, and finishing with country dancing at a ball, and sixpenny whist! I have borne it all cheerfully; nay, have sat hours in *conversation*, the thing upon earth that I hate; have been to hear misses play on the harpsichord, and to see an alderman's copies of Rubens and Carlo Marat. Yet to do the folks justice, they are sensible and reasonable and civilised; their language is polished since I lived among them. I attribute this to their more frequent intercourse with the world and the capital, by the help of good roads and postchaises, which, if they have abridged the King's dominions, have at least tamed his subjects."

Of monastic ruins and relics Lynn possesses few, and those, with two exceptions, are uninteresting. The Greyfriars Tower, however, which is all that remains of the church of a Franciscan convent, is notable for its slender lantern tower and the fine view it commands of the town and its surroundings. But far more interesting is the Red Mount Chapel, also called the Chapel on Our Lady's Hill. The old custom-house is a delightfully picturesque building; Greyfriars Tower is of sufficiently uncommon construction to attract attention anywhere; and some of the houses once occupied by the old merchant princes of Lynn contain work over which one loves to linger; but the Red Mount Chapel is something quite unique. Its smallness—I had almost written diminutiveness—and its unattractive exterior tend to its often being passed unheeded by visitors to the town; but in spite of its unpromising outward appearance it deserves close inspection, both for its architectural quaintness and the beauty of its internal carved work. Its roof is often compared with that of King's College Chapel; and as both buildings were erected



Custom House, Lynn.

about the same date it may be that the masons who carried out the one work had a hand in the other. Anyhow, the little

chapel in the leafy "Walks" where the people of Lynn spend their idle hours is an architectural curiosity, and the half hour or so I devote to examining it is far from being the least well spent during my journeyings. In view of its unique character I may perhaps be pardoned for quoting at some length from an interesting monograph written about it by Mr. E. M. Milligen, one of the historians of Lynn. The Red Mount Chapel, says Mr. Milligen, "may roughly be described as consisting of an inner core from the ground to the top, divided laterally into three storeys, the first and third storeys of which are chapels, and these are elongated to the east for the erection of altars. Around this core is an outer enclosing wall, and between the chapels and the wall is the staircase of approach. . . . . It now seems to stand on a mound of earth sloping on all sides almost from its present base; but this mound of earth covers a platform extending from this base some feet outwards, at the natural level of the present doors of entrance, and this platform is supported by a polygonal brick wall, buttressed at the angles, of precisely the same form as the outer wall now seen of the upper building. The principal entrance to the building is by the present west door, which opened on this platform, which must therefore have been gained by steps to it from the ground. The earth covers all this up . . . . The exterior of the building, as now seen above this artificial mound, is of eight unequal sides, of red brick, with buttresses at the angles, finished now with modern pinnacles. Rising within and above this is a cross-shaped building of ashlar, probably Ancaster stone, without apparent roof. This is the Chapel of Our Lady on the Mount, to which all the structure serves. Though so plain outside . . . . we have within a building quite alone in its form and of singular beauty and richness, and of its kind unsurpassed in the kingdom.

"Directly in front of the principal entrance is a window by which the worshipper could see beneath him the altar of the lower chapel, but the west door leads only to the Chapel of

Our Lady. . . . I venture to say that nothing can be more beautiful than the first glance at this small but perfect church. It is 17 ft. 1 in. long from west to east, and 14 ft. 1 in. across the transepts. It is so diminutive that it seems an error to apply the ordinary names to its parts, and yet it is perfect in its proportion. From the four central angles of the crossing rise four vaults, which dome-like meet in the centre, with the arches of its four sides larger in section, emphasising the form of the dome . . . . The transepts and quasi nave, or rather atrium, are each 7 ft. 2 ins. across and 3 ft. 6 ins. deep, and these as well as the choir are pointed waggon-vaulted in stone, the choir having four and the others two compartments each. The height of the centre vault is 13 ft. The details are all of great delicacy of execution; a niche in the southern transept (the canopy and base of which are now smoothed) must have been beautiful . . . . The extreme smallness of the chapel would admit but a small number of worshippers: this is remedied by three hagioscopes, so that those in the passage could see the elevation of the Host and join in the service." After examining the interior of the Red Mount Chapel no one can be surprised that queer tales were formerly told about its origin and use. Those tales, however, have been discredited by modern antiquaries, who point out that, in spite of what the guide-books say, the pilgrims to Walsingham did not pass through Lynn, and therefore could not have made the chapel a halting and resting place; that Edward IV. did *not* hide in it after his defeat in the Midlands, for it was not built at the time; and that the same reason disposes of the assertion that Queen Isabella often visited it during her residence at Castle Rising. I fancy that if the truth were known it would confirm the supposition that there was an earlier chapel on the Red Mount, to which these old legends referred. The present chapel was, it appears from the borough records, built about 1484-5, and its builder was a certain Robert Corraunce, who received his instructions from the Prior of Lynn.

Across the Ouse lie the peaceful hamlets of Marshland, whose early history is made up of the records of many battles with the sea. How strenuous were the struggles of their early inhabitants can only be understood when it is realised that nearly all this low-lying land beyond the river was once a great morass, stretching from the Ouse to the Nene, and that this morass was continually at the mercy of, and often submerged by, the waves. There was, however, a portion somewhat higher than the rest, and there were built those magnificent churches which are the glory of the district. But even that higher tract did not always prove a safe refuge for the fenmen, who sometimes, when the sea-walls gave way, were obliged to seek safety in the massive towers of their splendid churches. Neglect was often responsible for the breaches in the walls; but the men whose carelessness resulted in an inundation were severely punished, sometimes by being "walled-up" in the breach the sea had made. At times Marshland was so drowned that in the town of Wiggenhall St. Mary Magdalen there was no house nor land that "any profit could be made of," except where stood the monastery of Crabhouse or Crab Ouse—that monastery whose history has been written by Dr. Jessopp in his *Frivola*: it was said that "all was sea." Dugdale gives an account of one of these inundations, which occurred in 1337, when one of the banks of the Ouse gave way. Then, "the tide entered and overflowed a thousand acres of land sowed with corn, to the great damage of the said town" (of Wiggenhall). Again in 1570, according to Blomefield, "all Marshland was so drowned by the sea waters that there was not ten yards of whole sea-bank from Old or West Lynn to Magdalen Bridge in Wiggenhall;" and on November 1st, 1613, the sea broke in with such violence on Marshland that the damage was estimated at nearly thirty-eight thousand pounds. No wonder that King John came to grief and lost all his army baggage when he crossed this watery wilderness, or that the exertion entailed by such a crossing, following immediately

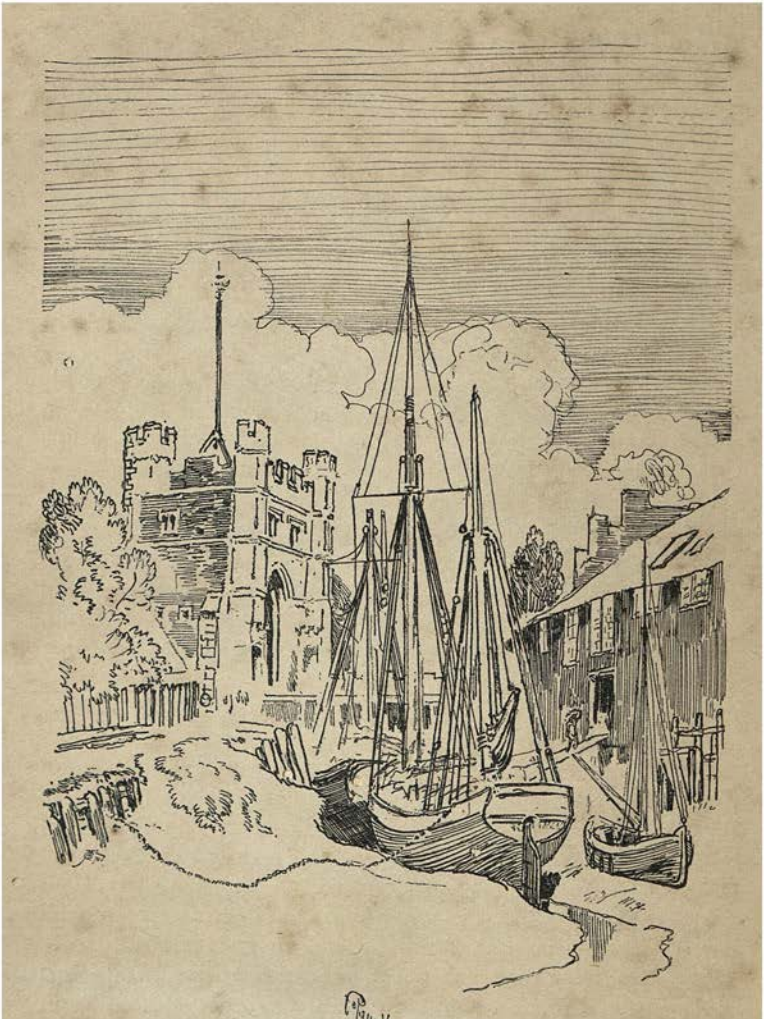
upon an enjoyment of the lavish hospitality of the good people of Lynn, brought on a "flux" of which he died.

One of the legends long cherished in Lynn had reference to King John's visit to the town. It was said that before he left the place, after bestowing upon it certain charters and privileges, he presented to the corporation the elegant cup which is still in the possession of the Mayor, and known as King John's Cup. Unfortunately, authorities on silver workmanship have pronounced it impossible that this cup can be of earlier date than the reign of Edward III.; while a sword called King John's Sword, to which a similar story attaches, cannot be more than three hundred years old. Of the cup a story is told which goes to prove that however doubtful may be its age and origin, it was unquestionably considered a great treasure by the civic fathers of Lynn. It seems that Mr. John Carter, an eighteenth century antiquary and draughtsman, heard of the cup and wished to make a drawing of it for his work, *Specimens of Sculpture*. For that purpose he made a journey to Lynn and requested permission to make a sketch of the cup. He was, however, a stranger to the Mayor and aldermen: they had never heard of him or his great work, and "positively and abruptly" refused to let him go near their prized possession. After repeated applications and protestations as to the honesty of his intentions, however, he was permitted to make a drawing; but only on the condition that he be confined to a room in company with a person chosen by the corporation but paid by him, it being the business of that person "to see that no improper liberties were taken with the valuable cup."

In touching upon King John's misadventure when he tried to cross the Wash, I. referred to Lynn's hospitality in the days of its prosperity. So lavish and ungrudgingly accorded was that hospitality that only Norwich and St. Edmundsbury, among the towns of East Anglia, could rival it. The merchant princes of Lynn could well afford to entertain royally their kingly and other distinguished visitors. Con-

viviality was characteristic of them; their guilds were famous for their feastings, and, as we have seen in St. Margaret's church, they even depicted banquets on sepulchral brasses. One of their most flourishing guilds was the old "Merchants Gild of Lenne," whose members had to conform to some curious rules. "None of the brethren," it was enjoined, "is to come into the Gild before the alderman and his brethren with his cap or hood on, or barefoot, or in any rustick manner; if he does he is to be amerced fourpence." A similar fine was imposed upon any one who slept at the guild, turned him rudely to his brother member, called him by any rude name, or let his servant sit down to drink at the guild. But there was no rule putting a limit on the eating and drinking for which such guilds were chiefly remarkable.

Early one evening, while the sun is yet far above the horizon, I set out on an hour or two's journey into Marshland, my chief object being to visit the church of Terrington St. Clement, a hamlet about five miles from Lynn. I would like to extend my excursion into this interesting district, which is famous for its fine churches; but as I still have many miles to travel in quite another direction, I must content myself with seeing one of the most renowned of the Marshland shrines. Having passed the fifteenth century South Gate—the only town gate now standing—crossed the Esk rivulet, and soon afterwards the fine bridge which spans the Ouse, I leave West Lynn on the right and enjoy a delightful ride along the perfectly level road which runs through Clenchwarton to Terrington village. The country through which this road is one of the chief highways is a fertile land, stretching away in every direction to a level horizon, and green with corn just coming into ear. Of the vast morass which in summer steamed in the sun and exhaled malaria among the dwellers on its few firm islets, there is now no trace, though the deep dykes which intersect the fields are kept so clear of



The South Gate, Lynn.

silt and weeds that I wonder whether the farmers are still fearful of the sea beating down the old banks, or a rainflood drowning their fruitful farms. Yet, many centuries elapsed before the work the Romans began was wholly completed; scarcely a hundred years ago there were tracts of unreclaimed swamp. Now, there is nothing in the external aspect of Marshland to show that it has not always been what it is to-day—one of the richest tracts of agricultural land in England. Along the level road robust and prosperous-looking farmers drive their dog-carts and market-carts, scanning the fields and pastures meanwhile with placid contentment written large on their faces. And they may well be content, for the Marshland pastures provide such grass for cattle as no other district in England can grow, and the Marshland field crops are the richest in East Anglia.

The wide fenlands drowse in the evening sunlight. At Clenchwarton the farmhands have finished work for the day and are lounging in the village street; Terrington seems tenanted only by like loungers, a group of children, and a flock of geese. But at Terrington is that glorious Perpendicular church which has no equal even among the Norfolk village churches. Its massive tower and ornate decorative work would make it remarkable anywhere; but in this quiet little fenland hamlet its beauty is seldom really appreciated. I try to enter it; but its door is locked and I have not time to discover the warden of the keys. This I regret, for I have read of some wonderful carved work in the transept, and of a font cover adorned by very curious paintings and tabernacle-work; but I find consolation in resting awhile in the churchyard and pondering over Terrington's past. More particularly my thoughts revert to the story of that flood which occurred here nearly three hundred years ago, when Terrington Dyke burst, the "town" was submerged, and many people were drowned. "In their distress," says an old record of the flood, "the people of the town fled to the church for refuge, some to haystacks, some to

the baulks in the houses, till they were near famished; poor women leaving their children swimming in their beds, till good people, adventuring their lives, went up to the breast in the water to fetch them out at the windows; whereof Mr. Browne, the minister, did fetch divers to the church upon his back. And had it not pleased God to move the hearts of the mayor and aldermen of King's Lynn with compassion, who sent beer and victuals thither by boat, many had perished; which boats came the direct way over the soil from Lynn to Terrington." Almost every hamlet in Marshland has a like tale to tell. When the inhabitants felt most secure, a weak spot in the sea walls revealed itself, and before it could be repaired the tide came flooding in.

Since I have reached this part of Norfolk I have frequently referred to the Walpoles. Here, in Marshland, I am reminded of them again; for it was from Walpole St. Peter, a hamlet not far from Terrington, that they took their name, and there they dwelt for centuries before they removed to Houghton. Horace Walpole, as can easily be imagined, had no love for what in his day deserved to be called the "low wet levels" of Marshland. The monotonous flats, over which, when there were no miasmatic mists, the sea winds swept with searching keenness, seemed to him the very embodiment of dreariness and desolation; and when he heard that his friend Cole was about to sell some of his lands in the district he hastened to write to him: "You are quite in the right to sell your fief in Marshland. I should be glad if you would take one step more, and quit Marshland. We live, at least, on terra firma in this part of the world, and can saunter out without stilts. *Item*, we do not wade into pools, and call it going upon the water, and get sore throats. I trust yours is better; but I recollect that this is not the first you have complained of. Pray be not incorrigible, but come to shore." Walpole (the village) can boast of an elaborately decorated Perpendicular church. One of its strangest ornaments is the carved figure of a satyr, locally

known as Hickathrift. In Tilney All Saints Church is another memorial of this local giant, whose size and feats of strength were in bye-gone days the subjects of many legends. Of him Dugdale, the historian of the fens, writes: "Now in Marshland there is a famous plain called the Smeeth, which being common to all the towns thereon maintaineth at least thirty thousand sheep; and yet it is not of a larger extent, in the widest part of it, than two English miles. Of this plain I may not omit to mention a tradition, which the common people thereabouts have, viz.: that in old time the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages had a fierce conflict with one Hickafric (then owner of it) touching the bounds thereof; which grew so hot that at length it came to blows; and that Hickafric, being a person of extraordinary stature and courage, took an axletree from a cart, instead of a sword; and the wheel for a buckler; and being so armed most stoutly repelled those bold invaders." This Hickafric, or Hickathrift, if all the stories told of him are true, was indeed a doughty man; but there seems some doubt as to whether he ever really existed. Yet his grave may be seen near the Smeeth, where is also his hand basin; and he has another resting-place in Tilney All Saints Church. This should be evidence enough that he was once a real live hero; but there are "authorities," made mad by too much learning, who would have us believe that Hickafric driving along in his car is nothing more nor less than a form of the sun-god: that the wheels and axle are the symbols of the sun and its rays; and that the great fight between Hickafric and the invaders of the Smeeth is symbolic of the sun drying up the waters of a great flood. Every man is, of course, at liberty to choose between Dugdale's legend and the far-fetched theories of cracked-brained investigators. For my own part I accept the Fenland giant as a man and a big one, and not as a symbol. Hickathrift with his mighty staff and buckler is too striking a figure to be disposed of by fantastic theories.

Another hamlet in Marshland is far more famous in song than Walpole, Tilney, or Terrington in story. That hamlet is Islington—the Islington whose bailiff's daughter was so charming that she won the heart of the squire's son, and so coy that all his ardent pleadings were in vain. The old rhymed story is unfamiliar to many who know well the modern version which has been set to music. Finding the maid would no "countenance to him showe," the lover grew despondent, and

> " when his friends did understand
> His fond and foolish minde,
> They sent him up to faire London
> An apprentice for to binde."

In London he remained seven long years, but never ceased to think of the fair daughter of the Marshland bailiff, who had ample time to regret her doubts and coyness.

> " Then all the maids of Islington
> Went forth to sport and play,
> All but the bayliffe's daughter dear,
> Who secretly stole away.
>
> " She pulled off her gowne of greene,
> And put on ragged attire,
> And to fair London she would go
> Her true love to enquire.
>
> " And as she went along the high road,
> The weather being hot and dry,
> She sat her down upon a green bank,
> And her true love came riding bye.
>
> " She started up with a colour soe redd,
> Catching hold of his bridle rein ;
> ' One penny, one penny, kind sir,' she sayd,
> ' Will ease me of much paine ! '
>
> " ' Before I give you a penny, sweet-heart,
> Praye tell me where you were borne.
> ' At Islington, kind sir,' sayd shee,
> ' Where I have had many a scorne.'

" 'I prythee, sweet-heart, then tell to me,
Oh tell me whether you knowe
The bayliffe's daughter of Islington.'
'She is dead, sir, long agoe.'

" 'If she be dead, then take my horse,
My saddle and bridle also;
For I will into some farr countrye,
Where noe man shall me knowe.'

" 'Oh staye, oh staye, thou goodlye youthe,
She standeth by thy side;
She is here alive, she is not dead,
But readye to be thy bride.'

" 'Oh farewell griefe, and welcome joye,
Ten thousand times therefore;
For now I have founde my owne true love,
Whom I thought I should never see more.' "

But it is time I bid adieu to Marshland, and return to Lynn; otherwise night will come on before I re-cross the Ouse. Yet it is with many backward glances I ride along the level road to West Lynn; for behind me the sun is slowly sinking, tingeing the western clouds with that crimson and golden glory which is oftener seen and lasts longer in Fenland than anywhere else in Norfolk except the marshes of Broadland. To-night the western sky is flecked with innumerable little cloudlets which are first fleecy white and then flakes of fire, while behind and below them it is of a greenish-golden hue, which, as the sun disappears, changes to a lovely amber, streaked with darkening lines of grey. Against this grandly luminous background the trees seem painted in Indian ink. When leafless in winter they must, when seen against such a sunset, look like the scarred and blackened relics of a vast forest fire. When I reach West Lynn I decide to cross the river in one of the primitive ferry boats; and while waiting for the ferryman to venture out upon the ebbing tide I lean against the railing of the landing stage and try to identify the prominent buildings of the town across the water. But the

old custom house, easily distinguished by its quaint turret, and St. Margaret's church with its two towers, are the only buildings I can recognise in the waning light. It is only from the west bank of the river, however, that one can get a satisfactory view of Lynn, and in daylight the view is not without its elements of the picturesque.

The ferryman has finished his pipe, and cast off the boat's moorings, and I am afloat on the dusk-darkened waters. But only for a minute or so; for after rowing a course which if it were traceable would be like the curve of a gigantic draw-net, the rower brings me to shore again. Then I find my way back to the neighbourhood of Greyfriars Tower, and receive the greetings of the landlord of a Lynn inn.

The Ouse.

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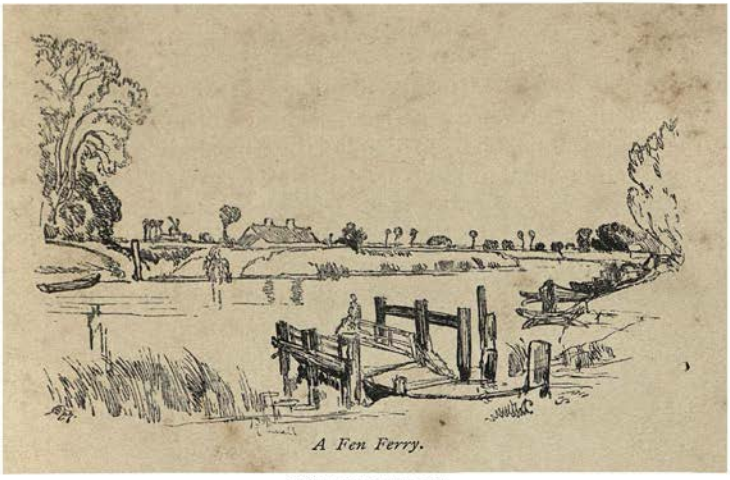


A Fen Ferry.

CHAPTER X

ACROSS THE FENS

THE historical interest of the country between Lynn and Ely chiefly attaches to the days when the Normans, after subduing Southern England, found themselves for a long time baffled in their efforts to make the Fenland Saxons acknowledge the Conqueror as their king. Our knowledge of events which occurred in the district in earlier times is mainly based upon monkish legends and less credible traditions; while even the jewels of historical fact of the Norman time are with difficulty detached from fabulous settings. The atmosphere of the fens favoured the preserving of old traditions. Through the mists which mantled the vast morasses the figures of the old fen heroes loomed large and awe-inspiring. Men who at night saw the marsh-fires flickering over the dismal swamps and heard the weird cries of the unseen birds of marsh and mere, found little incredible in the stories of mist wraiths and "Crulande devils." What the monks, to serve their own ends, taught them, they never doubted to be absolute truth. They readily accepted the strange tales told of St. Guthlac. Nothing was too wonderful

to have happened amongst the lonesome fens. That the monks themselves—or, at least, some of them—believed in those stories, no one can doubt: they themselves were nurtured on a mental diet calculated to increase their natural credulity. Too often they were blind leaders of the blind. They impregnated the Fenland air with mystery; and so long as the district retained its original aspect—so long as much of it was inaccessible except to those whom long acquaintance had made familiar with its lonesome lagoons and treacherous morasses—so long that air of mystery pervaded it. Even when the Normans had won their way to the Camp of Refuge and laid hands upon the treasure in the Fenland shrines, it was not wholly dispelled. Even now, in spite of—perhaps, in a measure, because of—what we are told in *Liber Eliensis*, *De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis*, and other monkish chronicles which deal with the last stand of the English on the Isle of Ely, it is impossible to say how much truth is in the stories of the fights with the Normans and the daring deeds of Hereward, the Lord of Bourn.

If I had not already seen something of Fenland, and were not destined to see much more of it before I reach Ely, I might be tempted to cross that part of the Cambridgeshire fens which lies beyond Wisbech and visit the famous shrine at Crowland. For Crowland Abbey played a prominent part in the making of Fenland history, and its founder, St. Guthlac, was the most notable and revered saint of the fens. But it is a "far cry" from Lynn to Crowland, and by the time I reached the end of my journey I should probably have had more than enough of the fat, flat fens; so I take the direct route to Ely, assuring myself that when I set foot upon the site of the Camp of Refuge I shall forget to regret having left unvisited St. Guthlac's ruined shrine. Yet I cannot rest content with the mere mention of St. Guthlac's name; for he was a daring man to have ventured, in those long-gone days, into the midst of a vast watery wilderness, and his experiences there were too

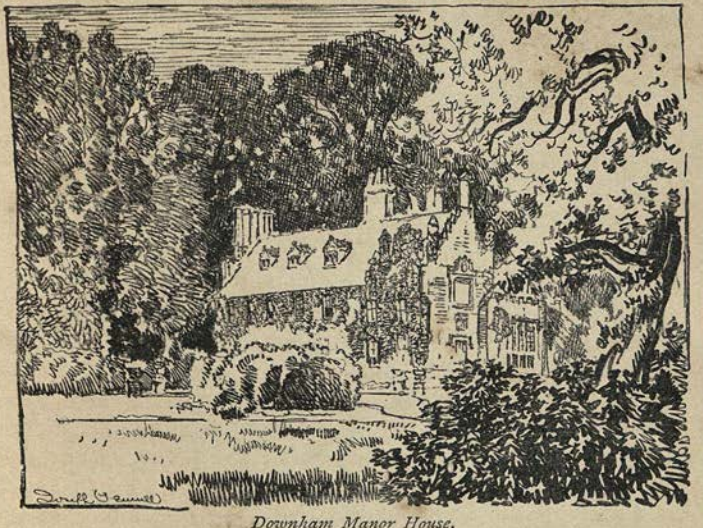
exciting to be passed over untold. He was born to do daring deeds. At his birth a red hand was seen stretching from the heavens to a cross which stood near the door of his mother's house—a portentous sign which meant that he was to live a lawless life, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. Such a life he lived for many years, chief of a robber band who spent their days and nights in murdering, raiding, and debauchery. Then, tired of being an outlaw, he petitioned the good monks of Repton for sanctuary, which was granted him, and for a time he lived at Repton, at peace with all men. But though he repented of his sins, he could not conquer his love of wandering; so, at length, he took leave of the friendly monks and set out for the fens. Here he encountered a certain Tatwin, who took him into his boat and rowed him to a place where was "a sort of island, as much infested by demons as the deserts of Egypt." For a long time those demons made Guthlac's life a misery; but they could not drive him from the fen isle. Indeed, his defiance of them —for he built himself a cell in the most demon-haunted part of the isle—gained him a saintly reputation among the superstitious fen folk, and that reputation he enhanced by proving himself gifted with wondrous healing and exorcising powers. As for the demons, they were "in countenance horrible, and they had great heads, and a long neck, and a lean visage; they were filthy and squalid in their beards, and they had rough ears, and crooked nebs, and fierce eyes, and foul mouths; and their teeth were like horses' tusks; and their throats were filled with flame, and they were grating in their voice; they had crooked shanks, and knees big and great behind, and twisted toes; and they came with such immoderate noise and immense horror that he thought all between heaven and earth resounded with their voices." Beset by such a horde, it had been no wonder if Guthlac had fled from among them; but he dared them to do their worst and refused to abandon his lonely cell. Then, according to an Anglo-Saxon chronicler,

"they tugged and led him out of the cot, and led him to the swart fen, and threw and sunk him in the muddy waters. After that they brought him into the wild places of the wilderness, among the thick beds of brambles, that all his body was torn," and "they beat him with iron whips, and after that they brought him on their creaking wings between the cold regions of the air." At last, disinclined to submit to more of their pranks, he invoked the aid of his patron saint, Bartholomew, with whose assistance he succeeded in driving all the "Crulande devils" into the sea; and if you should happen to come upon an old portrait of St. Guthlac you will see him represented with the whip in his hand with which he drove them to destruction.

Fifteen years St. Guthlac dwelt in the midst of the fens, and when, after his reputation for miracle-working had extended far and wide, he died, the monks of Fenland were not slow to realise how they might benefit by that reputation. They built over his tomb a chapel, in which some of them dwelt, and welcomed the pilgrims who came in great numbers to worship at St. Guthlac's shrine. So was founded the celebrated Abbey at Crowland—that abbey which, says Kingsley, had "its dykes, parks, vineyards, orchards, rich ploughlands, from which, in time of famine, the monks of Crowland fed all people of the neighbouring fens; with its tower with seven bells, which had not their like in England; its twelve altars rich with the gifts of Danish vikings and princes, and even with twelve white bear-skins, the gift of Canute's self."

While my thoughts have been wandering westward across the wide Fenland, I have been travelling southward along a road which, while it is one of the chief highways of Fenland, intersects a district which, like Marshland, little reminds me of its eventful past. It is a mistake nowadays to enter Fenland with a view of gaining some idea of what the fens were like in the pre-reclamation days. If that is the end you have in view you

had better visit Broadland, where the rivers are still in places fringed with tracts of reedy swamp, and the meres or "broads" are still undrained. Between Lynn and Downham the scenery is simply pastoral. Pastures and cornfields succeed each other with scarcely an interval of waste land; here and there is a clump of trees which, in spite of the height they have attained and the time they must have taken to attain it, have certainly never known what it is to have the flood-water creeping up their boles; the



Downham Manor House.

farmsteads, ancient as some of them are, do not look as though their inmates have ever had to fear the drowning of their live stock; while at Stow Bardolph the road is over-arched by the branches of trees as fine as any in the so-called "Gardens" of the Eastern counties. Through a district possessing such features it is pleasant to travel when the most commonplace things are attractive through being part of the pageant of summer; but there is nothing in it to arouse unusual interest or afford exceptional delight. All I note during several miles of

journeying is that at Stow Bardolph the old home of the Hares has been pulled down and a fine mansion erected in its place; that the village church is only of interest on account of its monuments; that near Downham Market the ground rises gradually, so that by the time the town is reached it commands a fair view of the valley of the Ouse; and that Downham itself can boast of nothing more interesting than a modern statuette of King Edmund the Martyr on the south porch of its church. Just outside the town, however, on the road to Fordham, is a charming old house ornamented with ancient brickwork; and at Fordham, on some rising ground to the left of the road, is Snore Hall, an old manor house in which—I have it on the sole authority of a boy I find fishing on Hilgay Bridge—"King Charles hid." At West Dereham, a village about four miles from Fordham, but some distance from the Ely road, old Thomas Tusser, who held the Abbey Farm there, acquainted himself with some of his *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, and there, too, lived that unfortunate Francis Derham whose affection for Queen Catherine Howard cost him his life.

After leaving Hilgay, which possesses no monument to Phineas Fletcher, the author of the *Purple Island*, who was rector of the village, I come to Southery, and then, after crossing Brandon Creek Bridge, soon find myself in the midst of a wide expanse of lowlands bearing more resemblance to what my imagination has pictured the fens to be than anything I have yet met with in Fenland. For here are actually some drainage windmills, though nothing like so many as one may see in a square mile of Broadland; and by the riverside, near the Creek Bridge, I hear the song of a sedge warbler. It is now possible for me to enjoy that sense of space of which Kingsley has written in his *Prose Idylls*; and enjoy I do, as I lie on a river-wall of the sluggish Ouse. Somewhere up the river the fenmen are cutting the water-weeds—cutting them, in all probability, with a primitive implement fashioned of a number of old scythes—and on the raft-like patches of water

hemlock and other rank-growing weeds which come floating down stream the water wagtails are strutting to and fro, industriously searching for the insects. While I watch the birds, a couple of narrow barges are towed past by a decrepit little steam tug, and moor near a farmstead where some waggons are waiting to unload. Apparently the river traffic is inconsiderable, for these are the only barges I see between Southery and Littleport. From a picturesque point of view this is hardly to be regretted, for the Ouse barges are ugly little craft, totally lacking the graceful lines and barbaric-brilliant colours which distinguish the wherries of the Yare, Bure, and Waveney. A bargee who comes strolling along the river bank agrees with me that the wherries are more attractive than the barges; but says he would not care to be master of a wherry, as he is not fond of quanting. He thinks the Ouse a "dull" river, and that it flows through a dreary land. If he had his way he would stay in Lynn, where "there's a bit 'o life sometimes;" he does not care for a country life; it is like living in a teapot and "peakin" at the world through the spout!

While I lie on the sloping side of the river-wall, listening to the lapwings wailing over the marshes, and the larks and meadow pipits singing, I try to imagine what the wide expanse of Fenland around me was like in the old days, when there were miles and miles of fens, but little Fenland, and the dwellers among them lived a semi-aquatic life. My thoughts go back to the time when there were no droves nor drains; and I fancy I see the early inhabitants of East Anglia, a people whose origin is still undetermined, living in holes in the earth or shelters of wattle on the fen islands; going out in their coracles to catch the fish of the meres; crouching among the reeds that they may lure and slay the water-fowl which flock to the fens in such vast numbers as to whiten the ooze flats and fill the air with their piping and wailing. I see that primitive people succeeded by the Iceni, who, driven from the woodlands by the Romans, seek safety on the almost inaccessible islands,

where they hold out against their enemies, even after a great firm highway is made through the very midst of the hitherto trackless swamps. There, many of them remain until the Romans are gone, when they emerge from their hiding-places and return to their old haunts. But they are soon obliged to seek refuge again on the islands, this time to escape the Saxon raiders, who, in their turn, when the Danish sea-rovers land on the coast, make those oases in the watery wilderness their stablest strongholds. Presently I shall stand on the site of their great Camp of Refuge on the Isle of Ely, where Hereward held out against the Normans.

A dreary land—if land it could be called—this must have been before the Romans heaped up long banks to keep out the sea, and taught the Britons to confine the waters to certain channels and prevent the submergence of vast tracts of ooze by every flow of the sea tides. Even those lessons were only partially learnt. For centuries after the Romans had gone this wide stretch of lowlands, through which the Ouse sluggishly winds, was almost as lonesome as the surface of a dead planet, its few inhabitants living amid the baneful flickering of marsh-fires and the gloom of miasmatic mists. As the years went by, however, and the fen isles became settled centres of increasing communities, a class of men came into existence such as were to be found nowhere else in England. They were men who spent their lives in catching the fish of the meres and rivers and the wild fowl of the flats; they were familiar with all the weird sights and sounds of the fens; they cared little for the shivering fits of ague or the bodeful gleaming of marsh-fires. Night and day they were afloat on the reed-girt lagoons or afoot amid the swamps, on winding tracks known only to themselves; they learnt to recognise every bird's cry and read every weather-sign that dawn and sunset painted on the wide arch of sky. The wild-life of the fens held few secrets from them. As lads they watched the otters diving after the black-backed bream, the herons fishing by the still pools; and

when they grew to manhood, and had to depend on their own unaided efforts for a livelihood, the knowledge they had attained in boyhood served them well. They may not have known or cared much about the rare warblers which landed on the Lincolnshire and Norfolk coasts in May and sung strange "grinding" songs in the reed shoals, nor is it likely that the Great Copper butterflies which fluttered among the swamp grasses attracted more than their passing glance; but they knew when the eels began "running" to the sea and the green plovers laid their eggs on the rush marshes. Generation succeeded generation, and century century; still the fenmen clung to the free, self-reliant life their forefathers had led, only adopting such new methods of fish and wild fowl capture as commended themselves to common sense; and when a comprehensive drainage system transformed the meres and fens into cornfields and pastures they found it hard to reconcile themselves to the new conditions forced upon them. Many and indignant were their protests against the action of the reclaimers, whom they accused of being willing to deprive honest men of all means of livelihood in order to provide new lands for strangers. Some idea of their feelings when they heard that an extensive drainage scheme was projected may be gained from some curious verses quoted by Dugdale and entitled *Powtes Complaint.*

"Come, brethren of the water, and let us all assemble
To treat upon this matter which makes us quake and tremble;
For we shall rue it, if't be true, that fens be undertaken,
And where we feed in fen and reed, they'll feed both beef and bacon.

"They'll sow both beans and oats where never man yet thought it,
Where men did row in boats ere undertakers bought it.
But Ceres, thou behold us now; let wild oats be their venture;
Oh let the frogs and miry bogs destroy where they do enter.

"Behold, the great design which they do now determine
Will make our bodies pine, a prey to crows and vermine;
For they do mean all fens to drain and waters overmaster;
All will be dry, and we must die 'cause Essex calves want pasture.

"Away with boats and rudders, farewell both boots and skatches;
No need for one nor th'other; men now make better matches.
Stilt-makers all and tanners shall complain of this disaster,
For they will make each muddy lake for Essex calves a pasture.

"The feather'd fowls have wings to fly to other nations;
But we have no such things to help our transportations.
We must give place (oh, grievous case) to horned beast and cattle,
Except that we can all agree to drive them out by battle.

"Wherefore let us entreat our antient water nurses
To show their power so great as t'help to drain their purses,
And send us good old Captain Flood to lead us out to battle;
The two-penny Jack with skates on 's back will drive out all the cattle.

"The noble captain yet was never known to fail us,
But did the conquest get of all that did assail us.
His furions rage none can assuage; but, to the world's great wonder,
He bears down banks and breaks their cranks and whirlygigs asunder.

"God Eolus, we do thee pray that thou wilt not be wanting:
Thou never said'st us nay, now listen to our canting:
Do thou deride their hope and pride, that purpose our confusion;
And send a blast, that they in haste may work no good conclusion.

"Great Neptune, (God of Seas), this work must needs provoke thee;
They mean thee to disease, and with fen water choak thee;
But with thy mace do thou deface and quite confound this matter;
And send thy sands to make dry lands when they shall want fresh water.

"And eke we pray thee, Moon, that thou wilt be propitious.
To see that nought be done to prosper the malicious:
Though summer's heat hath wrought a feat whereby themselves they flatter,
Yet be so good as send a flood, lest Essex calves want water."

But in spite of the old fenmen's fears, it took a long time to drain all the fens; and even when it was done the reclamation was, in many places, only temporary. Time after time the sea won its way back to its old estuarine flats. So long ago as the days of the Norman kings some tracts of swamp had been drained and cultivated, and in Stephen's reign a chronicler waxed enthusiastic over their fruitfulness. But in the thirteenth

century there were days of disaster, when, during a dreadful storm, the sea broke in and inundated many miles of Fenland, sweeping away homesteads and drowning men, women, children, and cattle. Eight days the storm lasted, the wind, in all probability, blowing from the west, for it is the west wind which, forcing the waters of the Atlantic through the Channel, swells the North Sea tides; and when it died away the country for miles around Wisbech was desolated. Again and again during the ensuing centuries similar inundations occurred at irregular intervals: even so recently as 1862 the sea-walls proved too weak to withstand the sea's siege. On May 4th of that year the sea broke down the banks near Lynn, and the efforts of the fenmen to repair them were in vain. In thirty-six hours the breach became forty yards wide. Through that great gap the waves poured for many hours, until fifteen thousand acres of land were submerged. Many farm-houses were threatened with destruction; their occupants had to be rescued in boats which were rowed from farm to farm over what a few hours before had been dry cornfields and pastures. Hundreds of men were employed to re-build the broken banks; but it was a long time before the farmers, and others whose houses stood on land below sea level, felt secure again.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century there were tracts of unreclaimed fen, and though by that time nearly all the meres had been drained, Whittlesea Mere remained, and on its waters and around its reedy shores a few fenmen were able to live much after the fashion of their forefathers. In spring and autumn they devoted themselves to eel-catching; at midwinter they gathered in their annual reed harvest; all through the winter they kept a watch for the wild fowl which flocked to the mere, and the rare birds which often alighted among its reeds and on its quiet waters. Among those few survivors of a vanishing race were some who still, when they went down on to the marshes, carried the long jumping-poles by means of which they leapt over the dykes; who had not forgotten the days when they

could skate for miles in a straight line over flooded and frozen fens. They could remember the time when the booming of the bittern, that "haunting voice of the Marshlands," was often heard amidst the dense reed jungles, and the beautiful little bearded titmouse was numbered among the Fenland's breeding birds. Now, Whittlesea consists of cornfields: in summer red poppies and blue cornflowers bloom where of old the water lilies floated and the reeds waved their dusky plumes; in winter the lapwing feeds where the wild duck sought a watery sanctuary. Only near the straggling village of Burwell, in Cambridgeshire, is there left a tract of original fen; and that, if what I hear is true, is likely soon to vanish. It is called Wicken Sedge Fen, and its extent is between one and two hundred acres. There, the sedge (*Claudium mariscus*) even now provides an annual crop for the neighbouring villagers, who sell it for thatching purposes. There, too, are found many of the wild flowers whose only habitat is the swampy fen. Most of them are still fairly plentiful in the boggy parts of Broadland; but one species, an aster, only grows wild at Wicken Fen and on the banks of the Tay, near Perth.

Fenmen will assure you that, so far as England is concerned, it is only on the Great Level of Fenland that you have a chance of indulging in real skating; and every one who knows what the district is like after a succession of sharp frosts will agree with them. Where else can skaters go for an out-and-home run of over seventy miles in a day, as has been done between Earith and Wisbech; or enjoy such an outing as did two sons of a Huntingdonshire farmer, "who skated from Holme station, by way of Benwick, March, and Upwell, to Wisbech, and after witnessing four races, skated home on the same day, covering a distance of sixty-six miles?" When the floods are "out," as they sometimes are even now, in spite of an excellent drainage system, portions of the Great Level are, in frosty weather, transformed into immense icy playgrounds,

where not only casual pleasure-seekers and professional skaters disport themselves, but even companies of volunteers have been known to drill and manœuvre on "patterns." Skating, it has well been said, is the fenman's second nature; you cannot keep him on the land if there is a sheet of ice strong enough to bear him on the water. So it is no wonder that from Fenland have come the swiftest of English skaters, nor that many "tall" stories are current as to their record-breaking performances. The names of "Turkey" Smart, "Fish" Smart, and "Gutta Percha" See are famous not only at Welney, Crowland, Ely, Littleport, Cowbit, and Whittlesea, where

Littleport.

many of their honours were won; but in Friesland, where their only Continental equals in skate-racing followed their doings with keenest interest, and were glad to compete in international matches with men so worthy of their best efforts.

No greater contrast can be imagined than that between Fenland in summer and Fenland in winter. To-day it is a sunlit but somnolent district. The cattle on the fens, glad to avail themselves of any streak or patch of shade, stand close under the hedges and willows and scarcely stir amid the seeding grasses. The larks' songs are only faintly heard—they are almost lost in the vast expanse of sky. The meadow pipits are even less audible; the *chizzit* of the wagtails is heard at such

long intervals as to suggest that even those active, dignified little dyke-rangers are enjoying a noontide siesta. Since the bargee vanished into the alehouse near Brandon Creek Bridge, I have not seen a human being, though there are snug little homesteads dotted about the lowlands. For a while it seems that the country for miles around is deserted—one might imagine the alarm had spread that there is danger of a great flood, and that all the inhabitants have either fled to the fen isles or hastened to repair some breaking bank. But presently I hear a sound which indicates that there is human life not far from the riverside—a sound characteristic of these lush pastures. It is the musical clinking of milk pails. At first I cannot discover whence it comes; but suddenly, from behind a weather-beaten cattle-bield, emerges a figure which might have stepped out of the pages of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. It is that of a fair young milkmaid, who is carrying to a neighbouring farmstead a couple of pails nearly brimming with frothing milk. She carries them in the old country fashion, on chains attached to a wooden yoke which rests upon her shoulders—a fashion which needs much bracing of muscles and causes the girl to walk as erect as a guardsman. A lilac sunbonnet, despite its capaciousness, fails to conceal the warm flush exertion has brought to her cheeks, nor does it wholly hide the delightful disorder of her dusky hair. Grace and vigour are embodied in this fair daughter of the fens, whose face wears a frank expression which may be the outward indication of a free and fearless spirit, or partly due to her gaze being accustomed to roving over wide vistas. The weight of the brimming cans must be such as would make many men glad to set them down every hundred yards or so; but so long as she is in sight she keeps on walking at an even pace. Such a stalwart maid would, I fancy, in the old days have been one of the first to shoulder spade and start for the bank that weakened under stress of storm. She disappears behind a hedge of sallows and elders, and I am left alone again in the midst of the fens.

Such is the aspect of a part of the Great Level to-day. Let me try and picture it on a winter day, when the floods are "out" and many acres of shallow water are frozen and able to bear the weight of a thousand skaters. The whole Level, except where the sweepers have prepared the ice for a winter carnival, lies under a white coverlet of snow; willows, gate-posts, and every other inanimate stationary object which rises above the snow, glistens with rime frost; the snow itself sparkles as though dusted with diamonds. Since about nine in the morning a continuous stream of skaters has flowed towards the ice, Lynn, Ely, Littleport, Wisbech, Downham, and many of the Fenland hamlets each contributing its quota to the crowd of pleasure-seekers. For the latter it is a great day. Not only are they to take part in one of the healthiest and most enjoyable pastimes, but they are to witness an important skating match between some of the best known experts in Fenland. As the time for the races approaches the crowd distributes itself along the borders of a course roped off for the event of the day. The competitors wear close-fitting jerseys and breeches; some are bare-headed, others wear a kind of malster's cap. Each man has supporters ready to back him against all comers; during the interval between the appearance of the racers and the starting of the race his merits and demerits are fully and freely discussed. While the race is going on the excitement is intense, and the ice around the course suffers in consequence. The winner of every heat receives an ovation; hats and sticks are waved, skaters able and awkward cut the queerest of capers, and the frosty air resounds with shouts of acclamation. The final heat is contested amid so deafening a din that one wonders how it is the competitors are not unnerved by it; but they go about their racing with set, stolid faces, as though the result were a matter of absolute indifference to them. Yet it is amazing what activity and endurance they display, what long strokes they take, and how sharply their skates cut into the ice. (Old

"Turkey" Smart used to take strokes averaging fourteen yards, and was known to have made them eighteen yards "with the wind.") That wide swinging of the arms, which distinguishes the Fenland skaters from all others, adds much to the racer's speed; but it is to sheer strength—splendid muscular development of back, thighs, and legs—that the fenmen chiefly owe their prowess. When you see them win races you may know that their success is due to hard training—to trench-digging and ploughing on the peaty fens.

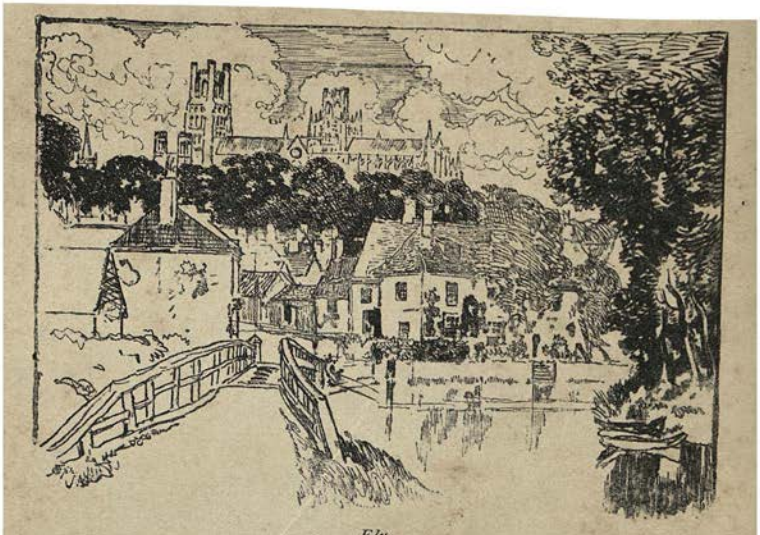
So the fenman's life to-day, while it has its hardships, such as long hours of exposure to drenching rains, scorching sun, and biting blasts, is not without its pleasures. On one thing, at least, he has good cause to congratulate himself: he is no longer subject to the attacks of ague, that "Bailiff of Marshland" whose shivering fits were so frequently inflicted upon the old-time slodgers and bankers. Dugdale was much impressed by the difficulty the fenmen of his day had in living a healthy life. "What expectation of health can there be," he asks, "to the bodies of men where there is no element of good? The air being for the most part cloudy, gross, and full of rotten harrs, the water putrid and muddy, yea, and full of loathsome vermin; the earth spongy and boggy, and the fire noisome by the stink of smoaky hassocks." Many of the victims of the joint-racking "Bailiff of Marshland" became habitual opium eaters: until a comparatively recent date the sale of opium in the Fenland towns was greater than anywhere else in England. Now that the fens are practically all drained the dwellers in Fenland are no longer slaves to the drug; except, maybe, a few old marsh folk who use it to "soothe a blank senility."

All the way from Southery to Littleport the road runs along the bank of the Ouse. By the time I reach the little Fenland town which has been the scene of so many famous skating matches I have had enough of the fens; but before crossing the bridge

which spans the river here and brings me into Cambridgeshire I pause a moment to examine some queer little houses by the riverside. They are smaller than any cottages I have hitherto seen in the Eastern counties, and with hardly an exception are lopsided owing to the gradual subsidence of the land on which they are built. Scarcely a roof-ridge is perfectly level; not a few of the shaky little buildings look as though a gust of wind would blow them down. It is only by the riverside, however,

The Road to Littleport.

that the houses have suffered in this way, for although Littleport is a large parish, containing over sixteen thousand acres of fen, the greater part of the town stands on slightly higher and perfectly solid ground. The tower of its old church is lofty, and in the days when the fens were swampy and roadless served as a landmark, and bore a beacon light at night to guide strangers to the town. Once over Littleport bridge and I have left the fens for a while, for the road from Littleport to Ely runs across the higher lands of the Isle of Ely.



Ely.

CHAPTER XI

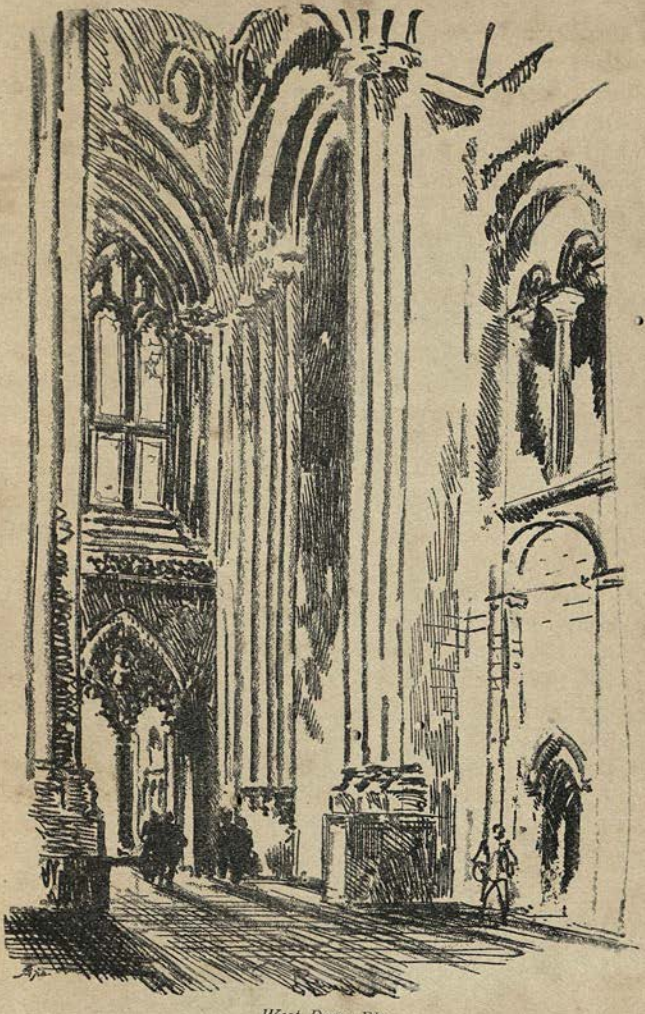
THE ISLE OF ELY

I NOW enter upon a singularly interesting section of my journey. I am approaching the last stronghold the Anglo-Saxons held against the conquering Normans. Before me—I get a glimpse of its towers almost as soon as I have left Littleport, though it is still some miles distant—is a glorious fane of the fens—that fane which arose on the site of St. Etheldreda's Saxon church. Near it was the Saxons' Camp of Refuge. On and around this famous fen isle were done some of the bravest deeds of which England can boast. Here, Hereward the Wake performed some of his most wonderful exploits. Here, a handful of brave men, commanding a few fenmen unskilled in arms, and the fragments of a scattered force, held out against the most successful warrior of his time. Here, treachery at last effected what force and strategic skill could not accomplish, and reaped its due reward. Some historians would have us

believe that Hereward is a mythical personage and that the famous exploits attributed to him are as fabulous as those of Munchausen; but Hereward has won for himself a place in English hearts from which historians can never dislodge him, and here in the heart of Fenland, amid the scenes made famous by the records of his daring deeds, it is useless to deny that he ever existed or was the hero men believe him to have been. If you are a doubter, there are men here ready to take you to Bourn and show you the foundations of Hereward's ancestral home; and they will tell you that the Wakes of Northamptonshire can trace their descent from the most famous Wake of all. They will point out, too, the scenes of his chief conflicts with the Normans; and it is, in their opinion, only the most foolish of sceptics who will question the accuracy of the old monks' tales. How, they will ask, can modern investigators judge of these things when they cannot avail themselves of the chronicles to which Robert of Swaffham and other mediæval writers had access? and why should we always doubt what we cannot clearly understand and prove? For my own part, I am content to accept the story of Hereward as it has been handed down to us, believing that there is more fact than fiction in the traditions upon which the old chroniclers relied and Kingsley based his fascinating romance. There must have been something wonderful and heroic about the Anglo-Saxon warrior to enshrine him so firmly in English hearts, and I do not envy the man who, after crossing the wide fens amid which the "last of the English" lay in wait for the Norman bands, can set foot on the Isle of Ely and attempt to discredit the stories which are as much a part of it as its glorious fane.

Now as to Hereward. It was at Bourn, in Lincolnshire, that he first saw the light. He was the son of the lord of the manor of Bourn. In his youth he displayed so turbulent a disposition that his father was compelled to obtain from Edward the Confessor an order for his banishment. So he left England, and for some years was a soldier of fortune, content to run any risks

so long as his life was eventful and adventurous. His fearlessness and uninterrupted success in arms soon won him fame, not only among the men of the armies with which he served, but in his native Fenland, where there were many who longed for his return home and aid in ridding them of an aggressive foe. It was not, however, until he heard that his father was dead and his lands had fallen into Norman hands that he turned his back on Flanders and his face towards his native land. Here, he soon made his presence felt; and the Fenland Saxons, hearing that he had, with the aid of his servants, driven the Normans from his house and lands at Bourn, came to him and told him of their hard case. This they did because they recognised in him a man born to be a leader of men, and one who, having had experience of warfare in many lands, was capable of successfully matching his skill against the Conqueror and his men-at-arms. Having heard what the Saxons had to say, Hereward soon made his way to Ely, where, in the Camp of Refuge, abbots, knights, common soldiers and many of the Saxons of the fens awaited his coming. He found them nearly all inspired with the same determined spirit; ready to fight to the last rather than submit to the hated foe. All around them lay the Normans, who, though they could not find a path through the swamps and so gain a footing on the Isle, were ever on the alert to capture or slay stragglers from the camp. Luckily the soil of the Isle was very different to that of the trackless fens, so the Saxons experienced few of the hardships usually felt by besieged garrisons; providing the enemy approached no nearer they might well have been content that the siege should last for ever. "Within the Isle," says Robert of Swaffham, "there is no pressure by reason of the number of their army, and they are not pressed by the enemy; seeing that, though blockaded, the ploughman does not take his hand from the plough, nor does the reaper's right hand waver in the harvest, nor does the hunter neglect his hunting spears, nor does the fowler cease from lying in wait for birds by the banks of



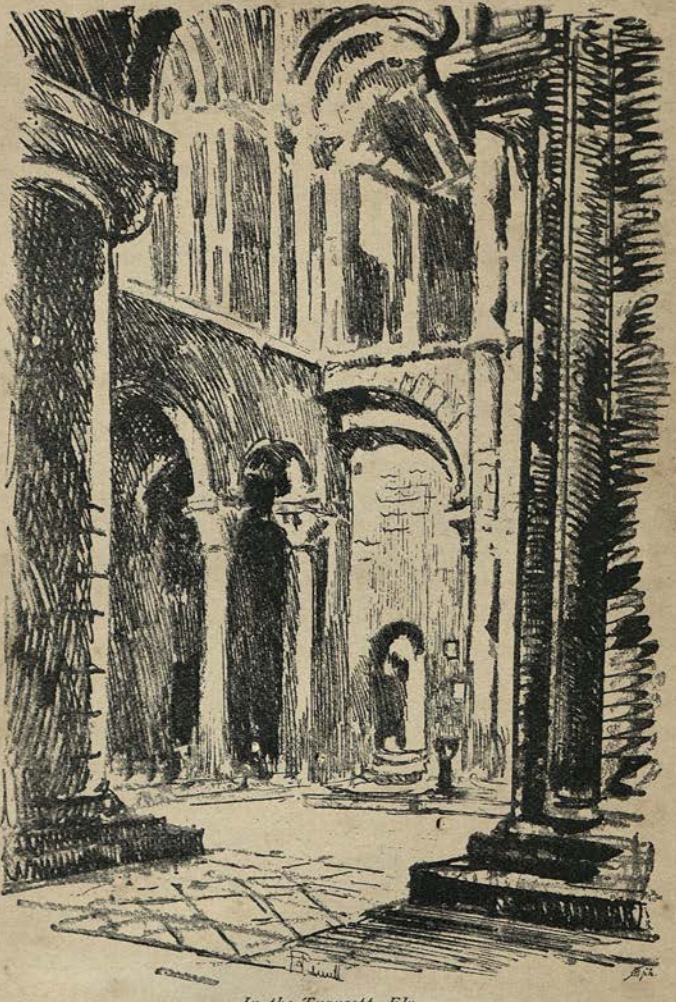
West Door, Ely.

the rivers and in the woods; for the inhabitants are well and plentifully supplied with all sorts of living creatures. For at the time when the water-fowl change their feathers and appearance, there I have often seen men bring many little birds, sometimes a hundred, occasionally two hundred and more, and very often not less than a thousand from one single piece of water. And from the woods that are in the Isle, in the same way, at one time of the year there is a great supply of herons, to say nothing of the abundance of wild animals and cattle. Then again from the waters round the Isle, it is very well known that they abound in every kind of fish." So, except that after a time they may have drained the last drop of wine from the abbot's cellars, the case of the "last of the English," who, after the death of Harold, fled to this fenland fastness, was not such a very hard one after all. Still, they were glad when Hereward arrived, for the monks were not likely to get them out of difficulties, and the knights and men-at-arms had tried and failed.

King William was at that time encamped at Brandon, no doubt on the dry heathlands there; and Hereward, soon after his arrival on the Isle, thought it would be as well that someone should go and see what was going on in the Norman camp. Finding no one on the Isle fitted to undertake the journey, he determined to make it himself. Saddling his lean and ugly, but speedy mare Swallow, he set out to cross the fens. Meeting a potter, he changed clothes with him, and, taking his pots also, assumed his business and speech, and so gained admission into his enemies' headquarters. He found lodgings in the house of a reputed witch, whom, during the night, he heard planning how she might discover a path that would bring the invaders to the Isle. In the morning he went about the camp crying his wares, and was at length brought by some servants into the king's kitchen. While he was bartering with the servants a man cried out that never before had he seen a man so much like Hereward as the potter. Hearing this the servants com-

pelled him to go into the king's hall, where many of the Norman leaders were assembled. Some of them doubted the likeness; others asked him if he knew Hereward. To the latter he replied, "I wish that man of Belial were now here among us. I hate him more than any one, and would wreak vengeance upon him; for he carried off a cow of mine, and four sheep, and everything else I possessed except these pots and my beast, with which I support myself and my two sons." After that he was sent back to the kitchen, where the servants, cooks, and kitchen boys attempted to make him drunk, so that they might have sport by blindfolding him and making him stumble over his pots. Finding him disinclined to be the victim of their frolicsome antics, they grew angry, and one of them struck him a heavy blow. Hereward, never the man to turn the other cheek to the smiter, returned the blow with such interest that his tormentor fell down and lay like one dead. Then all the menials and hangers-on of the kitchen set upon him; but he made such sturdy resistance that he killed one of them and wounded many more before he was overpowered. A soldier was then summoned to fetter him; but he broke away from his captors, slew the soldier with his own sword, and, mounting his mare, escaped from the camp and rode back to the Isle of Ely. When King William heard of what he had done he protested that Hereward was "a man of noble soul and a most distinguished warrior."

On another occasion Hereward disguised himself and joined a party of fenmen whom the Normans had set to work at making mounds and banks among the swamps on which to fight and employ their engines of war. For several days he worked among them unrecognized, and then, the work being completed, he set fire to the wood on which the mounds were built and so destroyed them. And again the Norman king was astonished at his enemy's daring, and commanded that if he were captured he should be brought to him alive. Then he set about rebuilding the mounds, and when they were



In the Transept, Ely.

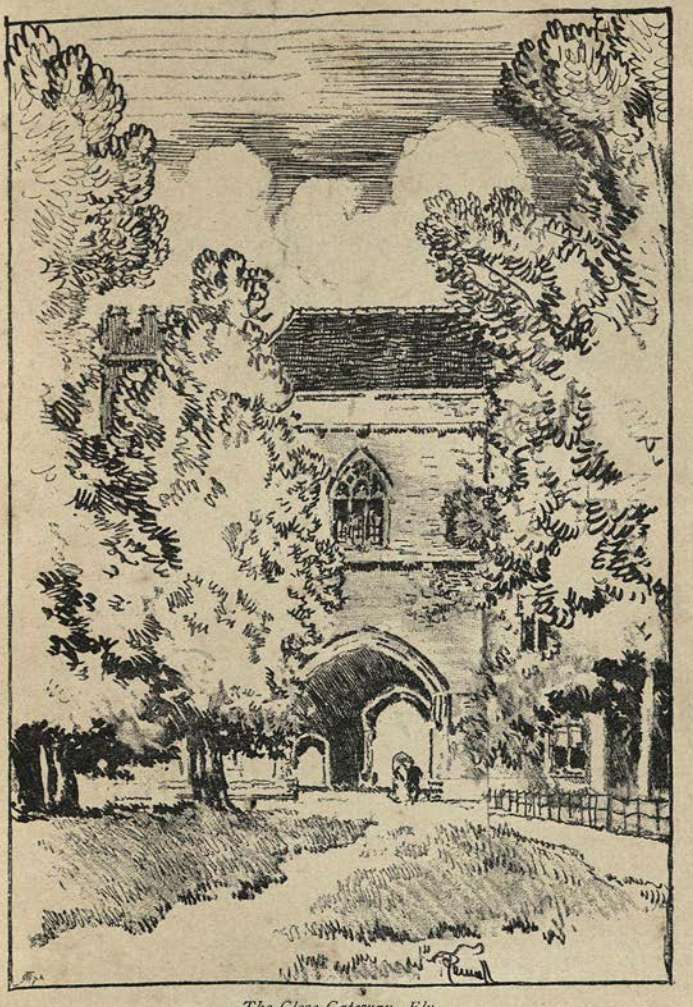
finished, occupied them with his forces and commenced an assault upon the English of the Isle. To encourage his men, he placed in their midst, on a high point where she was visible to them all, the witch whom Hereward had lodged with, whose charms and incantations would, it was believed, have a baneful effect upon the English fighting men. But the English, "who were hidden all around the swamp, on the right and left among the reeds and rough briars of the swamp, set the reeds on fire, and by the help of the wind the smoke and flame spread up against their (the Normans') camp. Extending some two furlongs, the fire, rushing hither and thither among them, formed a horrible spectacle in the marsh, and the roar of the flames, with the crackling twigs of the brushwood and willows, made a terrible noise. Stupefied and excessively alarmed the Normans took to flight, each man for himself; but they could not go far through the desert parts of the swamp in that watery road, nor could they keep the path with ease. Wherefore very many of them were suddenly swallowed up, and overwhelmed with arrows, for in the fire and in their flight they could not with javelins resist the bands of men who came out cautiously and secretly from the Isle to repel them. And among them that woman aforesaid of infamous art, in the great alarm fell down head first from her exalted position and broke her neck."

De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis is, as its title announces, made up of the doings of Hereward and the refugees on the Isle of Ely, and the translation * from which I have quoted is a capital

* *De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis* (The Exploits of Hereward the Saxon). From an original manuscript, contained in a book compiled by Robert of Swaffham, in the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough. Transcribed by S. H. Miller, and translated by the Rev. W. D. Sweeting. Peterborough: G. C. Caster. Mr. Miller says, "This MS. is undoubtedly the most ancient existing document touching the exploits of Hereward, and tradition says that it has its foundation in a record written by the mass-priest, Leofric, in the lifetime of the hero. The original narrative was lost, by some mischance, or only fragments of it were left, and upon these, and

companion for the stranger who wishes to acquaint himself with the scenes to which its stories refer. I have not space in which to quote further from it, or I might tell how the Norman soldier Deda made his way to the Isle; how Hereward quarrelled with the men of Ely because they made an agreement with the Norman king; how he took vengeance on the Abbot of Burgh, and afterwards saw a strange vision and flames like "fairies' lights" flickering on his followers' spears; nor can I deal with the sayings and doings of the Earls of Warrenne and Ivo Taillebois, and the rest of the French leaders who matched their military skill and personal prowess against the skill and might of the warlike Wake. But I must add a few lines to what I have written about the celebrated Saxon leader. For many months he held out against the Normans, who, in spite of their immense numerical superiority, were quite unable to resist his sudden attacks or surprise his watchful guardians of the Isle. Treachery, however, at last came to their aid. Certain of the monks of Ely, growing tired of their long isolation, sent a message to King William, offering, on condition that he would protect and guarantee to them their property, to show him a path through the fens by which his men might reach and capture the English camp. This offer was accepted and the terms agreed to, and, led by the treacherous monks, the Normans came down unexpectedly upon the Camp of Refuge, killing a third of its garrison and compelling many of the English to surrender.

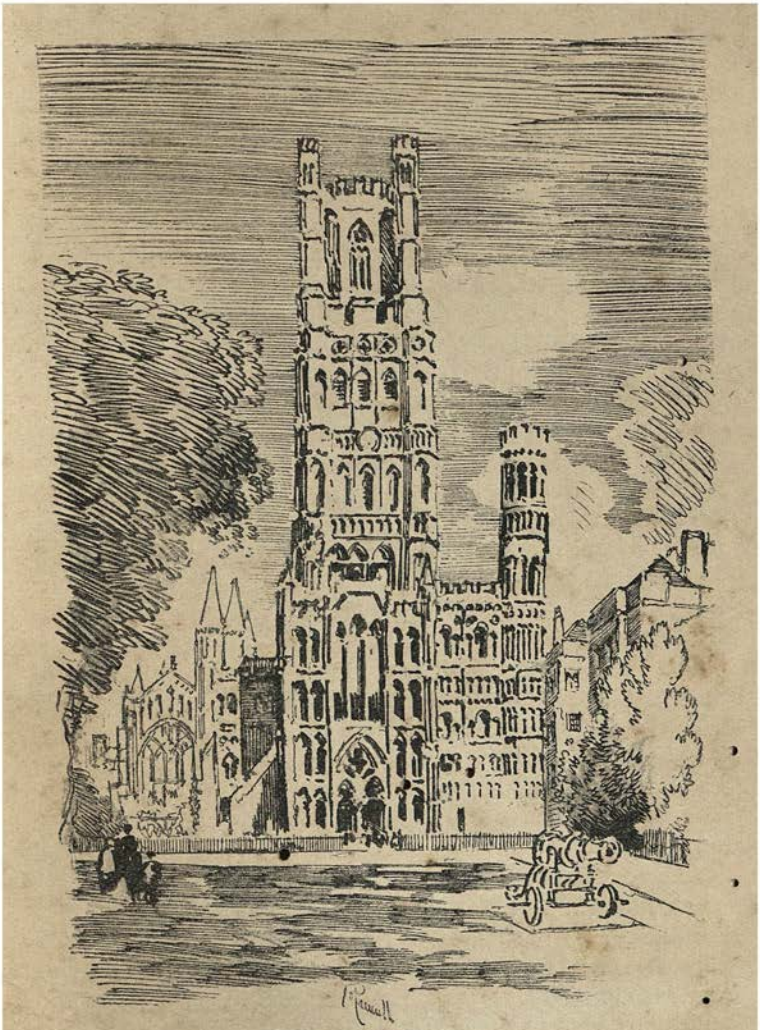
perhaps some legendary tales, the learned monk Hugo Candidus, based his story as here reproduced. Historians, no doubt, have rejected the narrative as unauthentic, and assigned it to the region of fiction; and it must be affirmed that although it is here put forth in its entirety it is not given as veritable history. At the same time it is difficult to understand how the monkish writers came to bestow so much care on that which had no ground-work of truth in it. Hereward himself has been thought, by some, to have been a mere imaginary being—a combination of heroic deeds personified. Genealogists, however, have shown an unbroken line of descent in the family of the Wakes, who have their seat at this day in Northamptonshire."



The Close Gateway, Ely.

But Hereward they could not capture, for at the head of a small band of resolute men he cut his way through the Norman ranks and succeeded in reaching the Lincolnshire Fens. And even this was not the last of his notable exploits. In Lincolnshire he met some English fishermen who were in the habit of conveying fish daily to a certain Norman garrison. Learning that this was their custom, he persuaded them to conceal him and his followers in their boats and convey them to the Normans' camp. Then, while the Normans were cooking and eating the fish which had been brought them, the guerilla chief and his men uprose from their hiding-places and fell upon the feasters, few of whom escaped to feast another day. By such tactics he kept the Normans in awe of his name, until at last, as Ingulfus says, "after great battles, and a thousand dangers frequently braved and nobly terminated, as well against the king of England as against his earls, barons, prefects, and presidents which are yet sung in our streets,—and after having fully avenged his mother's wrongs with his own powerful right hand,—he obtained the king's pardon, and his paternal inheritance, and so ended his days in peace, and was very lately buried with his wife nigh to our monastery."

The Isle of Ely with its pleasant gardens and sunlit cornfields is even more fertile now than when the Earls Eadwin and Morkere, Bishop Egelwin of Durham, and other leaders and advisers of the scattered English sought refuge here from the Norman invaders, and even then its rich crops and abundant wild life made it an oasis in the wilderness of fens. Its undulating surface is bathed in sunlight except where groves of trees and the walls and towers of its grand cathedral cast a grateful shade. Through the Close, among its ancient buildings, and in the streets of the quaint old town, phantoms of the past seem to glide—kings who ruled with the sword, queens hard-featured and fierce-tempered as their kingly consorts, saintly Saxon women who, to ensure a blissful future, lived lifeless lives; warlike abbots who held that a faith worth



The West Front, Ely.

living for was worth fighting for; monks with rubicund or ascetic faces, and lithe, sad-eyed fishers and fowlers from the lonesome fens. On the summit of Cherry Hill, the early English earthwork within the precincts of the old monastery, one can picture the Saxon sentries keeping watch for the Normans, gazing fixedly across the wide morasses where the herons fished and the redshanks and plovers piped, doubting whether it were the movements of an otter or a human being that set a cloud of white-winged water-fowl wheeling and screaming above the amber reeds. From the same height, in earlier days, men may have seen the boats bearing Canute the Dane and his viking followers towards the Island City; there, too, an abbot of Ely may have awaited the return of the monks he had sent to wrest the body of St. Withburga from the guardians of her Dereham shrine. Of every age in which there were men to fight, build, or pray there are relics on this fruitful fen isle. True, the traces of its earliest inhabitants are becoming obliterated; but there is work here, done for the glory of God and the salvation of men, which seems destined to last for all time. Among the many evidences of the past wealth and importance of this old Fenland town there is one to which the eye is irresistibly drawn, and that is its cathedral. The ivy-clad conventual buildings, the houses in which Alan of Walsingham and Oliver Cromwell are supposed to have lived, and the fine old Bishop's Palace, are all worthy of close observation; but the irregularly-built, massive, stately cathedral dwarfs all else to insignificance.

One must go a long way back to get at the events which led to the founding of this glorious fane, for it owes its origin to Etheldreda, a daughter of Anna, one of the East Anglian kings. Of this princess we know that she was born at Exning, in Suffolk, where she was baptised by Felix the Burgundian not long after he was made Bishop of Dunwich. Two years before the death of her father, who was slain in a battle with Penda, the heathen king of Mercia, she married Tonbert, an

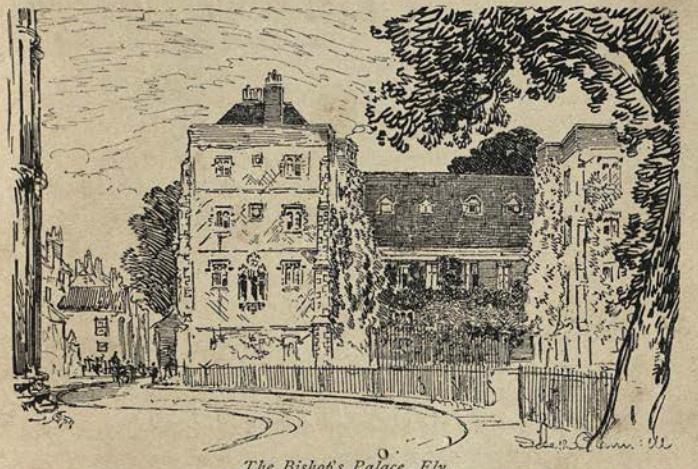
East Anglian chieftain. The marriage, however, was merely nominal, for Etheldreda had made a vow of perpetual virginity —a vow which was respected by Tonbert, and for several years by Egfrid, son of Oswy of Northumbria, whom she married five years after her first husband's death. But on coming to the throne of Northumbria, in 670, Egfrid tried to persuade his wife to break her vow. This led to disputes which ended in a divorce, and Etheldreda was permitted to take the veil and enter a nunnery at Coldingham. But she was not long allowed to remain in peace and seclusion, for Egfrid, regretting his decision, set out at the head of a band of soldiers with the intention of forcing his queen to return to him. Etheldreda, however, was informed of his intention, and, acting upon the advice of the abbess of Coldingham, fled to Ely. On her way to her native country she encountered many dangers and experienced many hairbreadth escapes. Once she climbed a hill called Coldeburch's Head, and was there seen by her pursuers; but a miracle saved her: the sea broke in upon the land, surrounded the hill, and Egfrid and his followers, after waiting seven days for the waters to subside, abandoned all hope of capturing his fugitive bride and returned to his own country. When Etheldreda reached the Isle of Ely she set about building a religious house for the accommodation of recluses of both sexes, at first choosing a site at Cratendune, but afterwards deciding upon one on the higher lands. Of that community she was appointed the first abbess, but did not live long to carry out the duties of her office. Six years after her installation she fell a victim to the plague, from which her death resulted after three days' illness. She was buried in the monastery grave yard, and her sister Sexburga, the widow of King Erconbert of Kent, was appointed her successor.

Ancient records of the Isle tell us nothing of the history of the monastery during the next two hundred years, except that sixteen years after Etheldreda's death her body was exhumed and found to be marvellously preserved from corruption. In

the year 870, however, "the tranquil life of the sheltered island sanctuary was," says Dean Stubbs, "rudely broken. Across the wide-spreading meres, through the labyrinth of dykes and lodes, and down the water streets cut through the reeds and sedge—the natural defence of the island against any enemies other than these—came the pirate fleet of the Danish Vikings. 'Deliver us, O Lord, from the Northmen,' had been a suffrage of the Litany of the time, but it was one to which the monks and nuns of Ely found no answer. The pirate horde swooped down upon the island, the panic-stricken inhabitants after a brief struggle fled, the convent and the church, as afterwards at Peterborough and Crowland, was sacked and burnt to the ground, while the convent sisters and brothers, without respect to age or sex or condition, were pitilessly slain among the ruins." One of the merciless Danes mistook St. Etheldreda's marble shrine for a treasure chest, and broke it open; but "when he had done this there was no delay of divine vengeance, for immediately his eyes started miraculously from his head, and he ended there and then his sacrilegious life." For more than a century the monastery remained in ruins; but in the reign of Edgar, Abbot Aethelwold of Winchester, the friend of St. Dunstan, came to Ely and restored it as a house for Benedictines. From that time until the Conquest its wealth and influence increased amazingly; many famous Saxons contributed largely to its maintenance; and its abbots held, alternately with those of Glastonbury and Canterbury, the office of King's Chancellor. The rights of the convent-church were confirmed by Canute; Edward the Confessor as an infant was brought and placed upon the high altar; but until the days of Thurstan, who was abbot in the stirring times of Hereward, little else happened that was calculated to divert the monks of Ely from their feastings and fastings.

Norman abbots succeeded Thurstan; and Abbot Simeon, in 1080, laid the foundations of the church which has grown into the cathedral we see to-day. But it is to fourteenth

century monkish designers, and chiefly to Alan of Walsingham, the sacrist who became prior of the monastery, that the cathedral owes much of the work for which it is notable among the fanes of Europe. Alan of Walsingham it was who designed the great octagon in which, it is said, "elegance, magnificence, and strength are so happily blended that it is impossible to determine in which respect it is the most admirable"; and again, that there exists no other building in which "the characteristics of power and beauty are so harmoniously



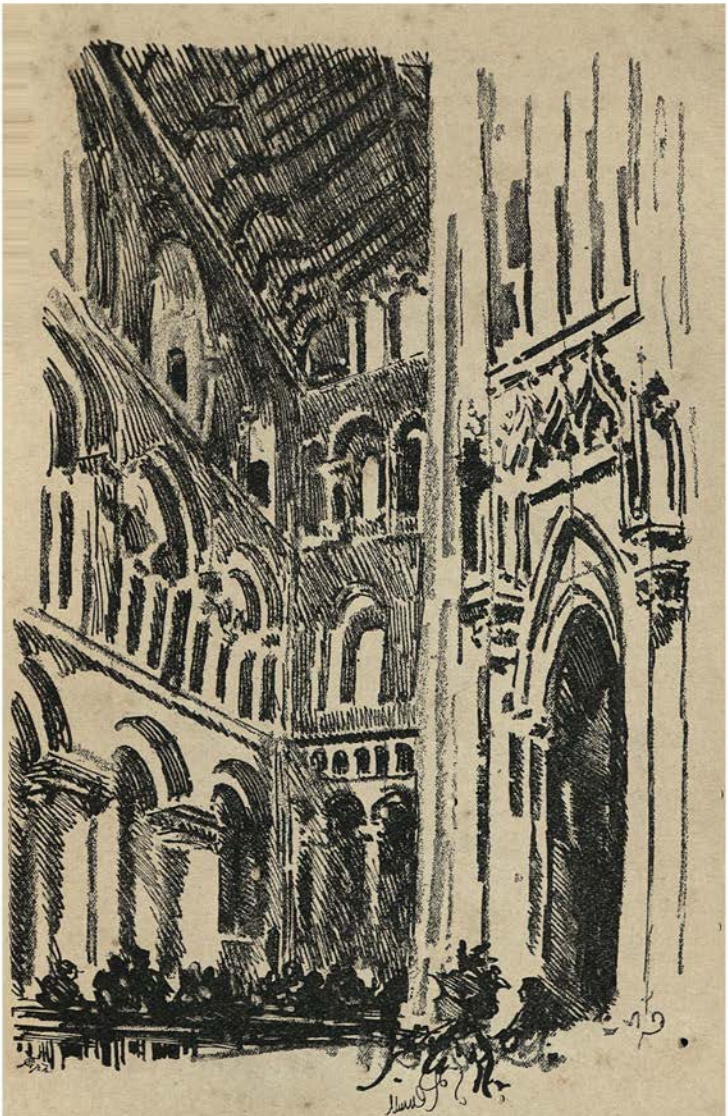
The Bishop's Palace, Ely.

blended into a complete unity of design." To the same inspired architect is due the admirable design of the first three bays of the choir; the Lady Chapel with its magnificent decorated work and splendid sculptures; Prior Crauden's Chapel, the Fair Hall, and other notable portions and adjuncts of the cathedral. He was buried "before the Choir," and tradition says that a large worn marble slab in the centre of the nave marks the position of his tomb. The Cotton MS. contains his epitaph, which has vanished from the slab. It is

contained in the last ten of some lines of which Dean Stubbs gives the following translation:

> "These things ye may at Ely see,
> The Lantern, Chapell of Saint Marie,
> A windmill mounted up on high,
> A vineyard yielding wine yearly;
> A simple folk whom bridges guard,
> High lands enrich, and rivers ward:
> Its name does come, so old men say,
> From throng of eels in water-way:
> Of all the wealth of many lands
> This wonder choir before all stands,
> Which Brother Alan raised on high,
> Let travelled men his fame deny:
> A Sacrist good and Prior benign,
> A builder too of genius fine:
> The Flower of Craftsmen, Alan Prior,
> Now lies entombed before the Choir;
> For twice ten years built, Sacrist, he,
> Then Prior crowned all in twenty-three:
> A Sextry Hall he made from ground,
> And Mepal, Brame, Church manors found:
> And when one night the old Tower fell
> This new Tower built, yea, mark it well;
> So now to end his labours great
> God gives him seat in Heaven's high gate."

The "old" tower referred to in the above lines was a square Norman tower which, in the year 1322, fell and greatly damaged several adjoining arches. Its collapse is reported in *Liber Eliensis* to have sorely troubled Alan of Walsingham, who for a time was at a loss to know how the damage could be repaired. But "taking courage, and putting his whole trust in the help of God and His most Holy Mother Mary, and also in the merits of the Holy Virgin Etheldreda," he eventually set to work on the restoration of the church, and in the end accomplished an architectural success which has made his name famous for all time. Having cleared away the fallen masonry, he designed eight stone columns to support the entire buildings,



The Transept, Ely.

and found a firm foundation for them, the chronicler says, "on solid rock." And so was brought about the erection of that magnificent octagon which has no equal in the "vast treasury of mediæval art."

It is impossible to give a satisfactory general description of Ely Cathedral. Its beauty is such as can only be depicted, and that must be left to abler hands than mine. I can only wonder and be thankful, and wander in a kind of waking dream from nave to chapel, from choir to tomb. I stand by Ovin's Cross, that old Saxon stone erected to the memory of Etheldræda's steward, and re-echo the prayer inscribed upon it, "Grant, O God, to Ovin light and rest." Wonderfully preserved Norman work in the long transepts sets me mentally restoring the church begun by the first Norman abbot of Ely; after gazing up at the vaulted roof of the octagon my thoughts naturally stray to Alan of Walsingham's tomb. Beautiful sculptures, mouldings, and arcadings testify that not only could the Ely monastery boast of architects with master minds, but that its abbots knew where to go for masons of wondrous skill whose hearts were in their work. From chapel to chapel, from tomb to tomb I pass, conjuring up visions of the saints and bishops whose names they bear; and at last my eyes grow weary of deciphering half effaced inscriptions and peering into shadowy and dimly-lighted recesses. So I return to the sunlit street, and, passing under the old gatehouse—the Ely Porta or Walpole Gate—stroll among the ruins and restored portions of the monastery whose inmates have left such marvellous evidence of their zeal, patience, and skill. The further I go, and the more I see, the greater is my wonder at the priceless and incomparable possessions of this staid old town. And before I leave Ely I am compelled to re-enter the cathedral, for its beauty possesses me, and for a long time will let me think of nothing else. Where the shadows steal slowly up the tall columns and across the floor of the aisles, I stay until the vergers are ready to close the doors and leave the cathedral to

those silent ones who alone may sleep within its walls. And again, next morning, I am irresistibly drawn to it, and I spend an hour in studying the fine paintings of the tower roof and nave. "The sacred history of man from his creation by the Word of God to the final consummation in the glorified humanity of the Son of Man reigning in majesty" is the grand subject of the nave roof paintings, and amazement is often expressed at the fact that they are the work, not of "professional artists" or Academicians, but of "two English

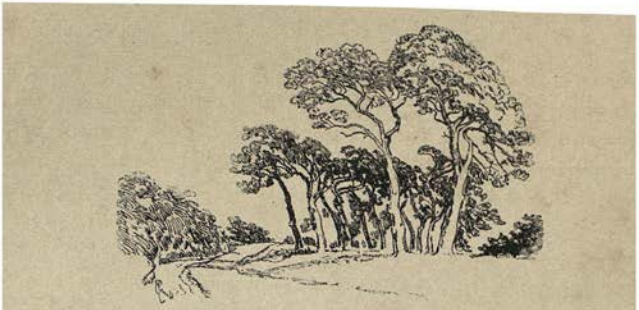
Ely, from the Park.

country squires," Mr. Henry Styleman Le Strange, of Hunstanton Hall, and Mr. Gambier Parry, of Highnam Court. Such work testifies that now, as in the past, there are men for whom the work they accomplish is their sufficient reward. "*Sit splendor Domini Dei nostri super nos, et opera manuum nostrarum dirige super nos, et opera manuum nostrarum dirige,*" were the words Mr. Le Strange inscribed at the west end of the roof when he began his painting; "*Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomine tuo da gloriam,*" were the words with which Mr. Gambier Parry finished it.

Any one who explores the Fenlands around Ely soon finds that, apart from a few churches, the interest of the district is in its past rather than its present. If he goes to Soham, along the old causeway built by Hervé le Breton, the first bishop of Ely, he sees, instead of the vast mere which King Canute crossed on the ice, a rich but monotonous tract of cornland; the "mare de Soham" of the old chroniclers is now a sea of verdure. If he has visited Oliver Cromwell's house at Ely he may be disposed to go to Wicken, where the Protector's son lived after the Restoration and was buried in the little village church. Near Haddenham, and about seven miles from Ely, is Aldreth, the scene of the Conqueror's attempt to bridge the fens and of one of Hereward's most successful raids upon the Normans. In Kingsley's romance there are two chapters, based upon *Liber Eliensis* and *De Gestis Herwardi Saxonis*, which deal graphically with the fighting on the Aldreth bridge or causeway. Along the bridge came the Normans, a "dark column of men," beneath whose weight the slim structure bent and sunk till the soldiers were ankle-deep in the miry waters of the fen. Still they pressed on, having set their minds on gaining the Camp of Refuge or dying in the attempt. And die they did; for when the English, led by the fearless Wake, came down upon them, the tumult caused the strained bridge to give way, and the luckless Normans sank and were choked in the peaty slime. "Thousands," says Kingsley, "are said to have perished. Their armour and weapons were found at times by delvers and dykers for centuries after; are found at times unto this day, beneath the rich drained cornfields which now fill up that black half-mile; or in the bed of the narrow brook to which the Westwater, robbed of its streams by the Bedford Level, has dwindled down at last." One of the men who tried to cross the bridge escaped. He was that gallant Sir Deda, who, after felling the Wake with a sword stroke on his helm, was ringed round by fierce Saxons and compelled to surrender to his fallen foe. He was taken to Ely, and there

treated so well that when he returned to William's camp at Brandon his only complaint was (to quote the words Kingsley has put in his mouth), that he was suffering from a "surfeit of good victuals and good liquor," for of good cheer, he said, there was plenty on the beleaguered isle. The heaping-up of a circular earthwork at Willingham, near Aldreth, has been attributed to the Normans who fought and died in that attempt to cross the fens; but though they may have occupied it, it is the work of a people who dwelt and fought there long before the Normans' time.

And now I am about to leave the Fenland and return to the upland heaths and towns. And I am going to leave it, not by one of its firm level roads along which it has been so pleasant and easy to cycle, but by the speedier and more prosaic railroad, to which for once in the course of my travels I am glad to resort for a while. For I am bent on getting as quickly as I can to Brandon; and on asking direction at Ely I find that where Norman William was unable to make a crossing over the fens there is still no direct road. A cattle-tender or dyker might, no doubt, be able to find a way; but a cyclist, unless he is willing to go round by Mildenhall and travel through an uninteresting district, does well to make the journey by rail. So from the heights of the historic Isle I take a last long look across the sunlit levels, and while I do so, and think of what I have seen of them since I left Lynn, I cannot but agree with Kingsley that "They have a beauty of their own, these great fens, even now, when they are dyked and drained, tilled and fenced—a beauty as of the sea, of boundless expanse and freedom . . . . Overhead the arch of heaven spread (s) more ample than elsewhere, as over the open sea; and that vastness . . . . gives such cloudlands, such sunrises, such sunsets, as can be seen nowhere else within these isles."



The Woods near Brandon.

CHAPTER XII

BRANDON AND THETFORD

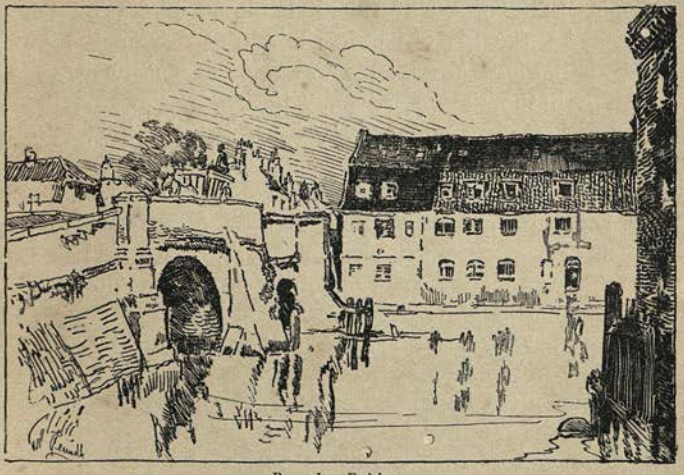
On a grey day when the clouds hang low over the warrens, and the belts of firs on the ridges are often hidden by a mist of rain, Brandon's outward aspect is singularly dreary. Under ordinary circumstances there is something depressing about the place: its black flint houses seem in continual mourning; but on a dull wet day it is so utterly dismal that words cannot describe it. For nearly two hours I have stood at the open doorway of a flint-knapper's working-shed, listening to the splashing of the rain and the wailing of the wind outside, and the monotonous tap-tapping of the flint-workers within. The owner of the shed, who sits on a low stool, nursing flints as a cobbler does a boot, has tried to cheer me by telling me that it was fine yesterday and "as like as not" it will be fine again to-morrow; but I do not heed him, and gloomily wonder when I shall be able to start on my journey across the Great Warren. I have had enough of Brandon, though I only arrived here this morning. I feel that I have seen enough of flint houses, flint chapels, flint sheds, flint garden walls, and heaps of chalk-whitened flints to last me a lifetime. As for the prehistoric flint pits at Weeting, my experiences during the hours when I wandered in search of them over what seemed interminable miles of warren and heathland I am not likely soon to forget.

For while I was in the midst of a wide tract of waste land, which had no track along which I could cycle or drive, I was caught in a drenching rain storm, which in a little while filled all the hollows of that wide waste with pools of water. Still I pressed on, determined that having gone so far I would not return without having seen the far-famed "graves." Plovers cried mournfully around me, as though warning me to venture no further into that dreary waste; the wind wailing among the rugged firs was as the voice of desolation; no rabbit peered from its burrow, no lizard rustled among the wiry ling. I tried to convince myself of the fact that it was June, and that yesterday I had heard the larks singing over the fruitful fields of the Isle of Ely; but all I could imagine was that this was the "lonesome October," and that I was wandering through the "misty mid-region of Weir." Knee-deep in last year's wet, withered bracken, for as yet the green croziers of the new leaves were unopened, I stumbled along, facing the wind-driven, blinding rain; and a warrener who was hastening towards home and shelter, stared after me wonderingly. I could imagine him believing me a criminal fleeing from justice and seeking safety in the lone places of the world; and again I could picture him telling his wife of the dishevelled madman he had met out on the waste. How far I wandered out of my way I cannot say; but I know that two hours elapsed before I found "Grimes Graves," and the flint-knapper has since told me that I might have reached them in half an hour. And when I had found them, in a kind of plantation in the midst of that wild waste, what did I see?—an earthwork surrounding innumerable hollows of varying size and depth, but almost all overgrown and choked with a rank growth of nettles! The pits, for all one could tell by looking at them, might have been ten or ten thousand years old. As in the case of the "Shrieking Pits" of Aylmerton, there was nothing in their outward appearance to indicate or suggest their age or origin. But the name they bear, and by which they have been known for many centuries, proves that the Saxon settlers

found them looking very much the same as they do to-day, and were puzzled as to who had made them. "Grimes Graves" suggests Grimspound, the ancient settlement on Dartmoor, and the Hundred in which they are situated is the Grimshoe Hundred, the court of which was held on a large howe or tumulus at the east end of this strange group of pits. The etymon of the "Grim" in each case has been the subject of much discussion; but etymologists have found it in *grima*, which means the grim or evil one.

Since visiting, under such unpleasant circumstances, these "Devil's Pits" at Weeting, I have tried to learn something more about them than can be gathered in the course of a superficial examination. I find that there are in all 254 of them; that they are grouped within an area of about twenty acres; and that although they are now more than half filled with earth and decayed vegetation, it is known that many of them were originally quite forty feet deep. By carrying out extensive investigations, Canon Greenwell solved, to his own and other antiquaries' satisfaction, the mystery of their origin. They are, he says, nothing more nor less than flint-workings from which the men of the Neolithic Age procured the flints they fashioned into weapons of warfare and the chase. Picks made of deer antlers were discovered lying side by side with axes and arrow-heads of the Neolithic period; and with little difficulty Canon Greenwell was able to trace subterranean galleries in the chalk, excavated by the prehistoric wielders of the primitive picks. So it was conclusively proved that flint-knapping was carried on in the neighbourhood of Brandon ages before guns were invented or flints were first used in the building of churches and houses—so long ago, indeed, as the days when men lived in holes in the earth and pile-dwellings in the fens. This is not to say, as some have said, that flint-knapping has been in progress at Brandon ever since the Stone Age, for there was a wide interval between the days when flint axes were used and those when weapons of

percussion were first invented—an interval when flint was little used, even for road-making and mending. So one is inclined to doubt the statement of those who say that some of the terms still employed by the knappers are "relics of the Neolithic language." But there is no doubt that in the district which contains the town of Thetford and the village of Brandon there was a large settlement of the early inhabitants of Britain. From the gravel banks on both sides of the Ouse hundreds of flint implements have been brought to light. In



Brandon Bridge.

fact, during the last quarter of a century they have been found in such numbers that there has been little need for the Brandon knappers to exercise their ingenuity in manufacturing spurious axes and arrow-heads to meet the demands of museums and private collectors.

I have been discussing this modern manufacture of flint weapons and the disposal of them as genuine prehistoric relics with the knapper in whose workshop I am waiting until the rain shall cease, and I learn that at one time it was quite a

profitable business. Many a stone axe and arrow-head treasured by amateur collectors was, fifty years ago, reposing unfashioned in its nodule of flint. Some of the Brandon-made weapons are marvellous examples of their makers' skill, superior, even, to those made by the famous "Flint Jack" or "Shirtless" (he was known in East Anglia by the latter name), that "prince of fabricators of antiques." "Flint Jack," though he did not confine his attention to the making of flint-weapons (being an adept at fashioning spurious fibulæ, coins, and seals), often visited Brandon, where he soon discovered that there was little about flint-working the local knappers did not know. He was a curious character, and might have turned his ingenuity to better use. When an appeal on his behalf was made by the editor of the *Reliquary*, it was said that he possessed more real practical antiquarian knowledge than many of the leading antiquaries, and was a good geologist and palæontologist. But after he had, in a moment of weakness, confided to a collector the fact that a number of the latter's valued flint weapons were of his (Flint Jack's) own making, he experienced hard times, and sunk into a state of poverty and misery. What became of him no one knows.

An even more important event than the solving of the mystery of the Weeting "Devil's Pits," was the finding, in the neighbourhood of Brandon, of genuine flint weapons underneath the upper boulder clay. The importance of that discovery could only be appreciated by geologists or persons who had made a special study of Britain's prehistoric relics and the strata in which they were found. It meant that long before the Arctic ice-sheets extended over a considerable portion of Eastern England, man existed here and armed himself with those primitive weapons. It effectually disposed of the arguments of those scientists who affirmed that man's presence on the earth was post-glacial only, and it administered a severe shock to the nerves of people who believed that man was first created

about four thousand years ago. But the world has grown used to the shattering of its old beliefs, and now we are quite ready to admit the truth of statements and the feasibility of theories at which our grandfathers would have held up their hands in horror. Only a hundred years ago a Norfolk historian found in the presence of cockle-shells in the earth at Thetford incontestible evidence of the "universality of the Deluge." "Such discoveries," he wrote, "furnish the friends of religion with clearer proofs of the wonderful works of nature than the abstruse reasonings of some philosophers, and tend more to remove those dark mists of scepticism which hurry too many into a disbelief of the clearest as well as the most sacred truths." Now, we remain comparatively unmoved when the finding of a flint weapon underneath the upper boulder clay satisfies geologists that there were men on the earth ages before the days of the Biblical Adam.

While I am an unwilling loiterer in his shed, the knapper initiates me into the mysteries of his craft so far as concerns the making of gun-flints. Taking up a flint so huge that it requires two hands to lift it, he first "quarters" it, that is, breaks it into sections five or six inches in thickness. This he does with a hammer such as a blacksmith would possess; but the next process, called "flaking," which consists of breaking thin strips or flakes off the "quartered" sections, is effected with a smaller hammer. So skilfully, and with such a curious knack, is this flaking done, that it leaves each flake with two sides shaped as in a gun-flint; and the "knapping" it then undergoes is simply the breaking of it into sharp-edged squares. This is done by resting it on an iron tool like a blacksmith's "hard chisel," fixed upright on a bench, and splitting it twice with two blows of a small hammer. The processes are difficult to explain, but look very simple. The amateur who attempts them, however, finds that it is in appearance only that they are simple. Gun-flints are made in four sizes—for muskets, carbines, horse pistols, and single-barrelled pistols. That a market

can still be found for them is surprising; but I am told that the Arab tribes of Northern Africa purchase large quantities, and that since the opening up of the Congo basin considerable trade in gun-flints has been done with the Central African tribes. While I am in the shed a set of gun-flints in four sizes is made in as many minutes by a lad who all day long does nothing else but make them and drop them into old biscuit tins.

Tap-tap, chip-chip, chink-chink. Turning my back towards the knappers, I might well imagine I were listening to a gang of road-menders, stone-breaking; but even the road-menders are not at work to-day, or if any of them went out on to the roads this morning they are now crouching in the scanty shelter of the roadside pollard oaks. Or, banishing from my mind all impressions of the iron-headed, steel-faced hammers and dusty biscuit tins, the knappers' pipes, and the glass in the workshop windows, I can almost believe that time has turned backward, the world is again in its Stone Age, and Neolithic men are fashioning their weapons of flint. I can picture them coming in from the dark woods which skirt the fens and the high heath-lands where the bustards dwell. Clad in cloaks of skins; their bodies stained with the juices of woodland berries; they steal silently, in single file, along rude trackways first made by prowling beasts. They are a short, dark featured people; their hair, untrimmed and unbound, hangs matted over their eyes; each man has a stone axe in his belt, and the woman who follows close behind him, carries his bow and arrows barbed with stone. Some of them have moored coracles among the reeds of the fens—they have come from a cluster of pile-dwellings in the midst of a fowl-haunted mere; others descend from the hillsides, where they dwell in dark and secret caves. But they are all journeying in the same direction—towards the rude flint quarries on the tawny heath. There they set to work, each man for himself, tapping flint against flint as they fashion new axes and arrow-heads for their belts and bows.

They will soon be engaged in a tribal war. Somewhere across the fens or beyond the wide dark woodlands dwells another people of like type, similarly employed. Presently, when they have finished the making of their new weapons, they set out for the fray. The fighting is such as England has not seen for thousands of years, and will never see again. Breasts are pierced and skulls cleft by weapons of flint, and the men who shoot and wield these weapons fight like beasts and show no mercy. They fight to the death; and the wives and daughters of the vanquished are the victors' prize. And huge and strange beasts, which men can only picture now by pondering over their broken and crumbling bones, are aroused from their wallowing in the fens and sleeping in the woods by the tumult of the conflict, and gaze wonderingly at the warring. And on the scene of that fierce battle the warriors heap a high mound over the bodies of the slain; so that thousands of years afterwards another people, like yet unlike the men of the Stone Age, grope amid the dust of the mound and muse over its weapons and bones. They go, too, to the flint quarries, and find the antler-picks lying where the Neolithic workers left them; and, on seeing them, they conjure up visions of the past.

A gleam of sunlight breaks through the clouds and streams through the window of the knapper's shed, the interior of which seems suddenly filled with floating gold dust. The rain ceases to beat against the grimy window panes and patter on the roof; a sudden change of wind drives the clouds away and dries up the smaller rain pools. Birds which since early morning have been silent and unseen, emerging from the shelter of eaves and hedges, chirp and flutter, pipe and preen in the warm sunlight; a pair of brimstone butterflies appears suddenly among the knapper's flower-beds; and when I ride out of Brandon and enter upon the open road which crosses Thetford Warren I see scores of chalk-hill blues and small heaths fluttering around the clumps of gorse and broom. The

Great Warren, usually so sun-scorched and barren, is as fragrant as a bean-field; odours of gorse, grass, and fir are mingled in the humid air. The wind no longer blows in boisterous gusts, but breathes warmly and balmily on Nature's freshened face. Over the vale of the Ouse hangs a shimmering blue haze, through which the wind-ruffled willows and white poplars gleam silvery white; on the high ridges dusky firs and feathery larches show clear-cut outlines against an already cloudless sky. Across the mossy and stony footpaths—where the warreners sometimes find flint arrow-heads lying, as though they were really "elfshot" from the woods—hundreds of rabbits, black and fawn-coloured, scurry at the ringing of my bicycle bell; now and again a flock of lapwings rises from some rushy hollow and flies waveringly towards the marshes of the Ouse. Except for the grey old house in which the head warrener lives, and which owing to its style of architecture is believed to have been an ancient fortress, there is no human habitation on the warren. Bathed in the warm sunshine of a June afternoon, the face of the waste, despite its lonesomeness, is strangely beautiful; like a gipsy girl's it fascinates by its wildness. But unlike a human face its changes are passionless. The sun may scorch it, the wind buffet it, the rain beat upon it, still it remains impassive; it assumes many different aspects, yet is ever itself the same.

While in the Castle Museum at Norwich I stood a long time admiring a splendid group of bustards. It consisted entirely, I believe, of Norfolk-bred birds; and I could not but lament the extinction, not only in Norfolk, but in the whole British Isles, of one of the handsomest species of our avi-fauna. Here, on this tawny warren, I am in the midst of one of their last British haunts. As the "last of the English" fled to the inaccessible fen isles, so those beautiful birds, driven by enclosure and persecution from many of the waste lands where they had bred undisturbed, made a last stand against the invader and destroyer on these barren border-lands. Yet even here

they found no sanctuary, and some sixty years ago the sole survivor of the Norfolk and Suffolk "droves," a fine male bird, was shot near Swaffham. There is reason for believing that Norfolk folk generally were strongly opposed to the killing of the bustards, and that their extinction was due to the unsportsmanlike conduct of a "fellow from London," as he was called, who not only shot but trapped them. For doing so he narrowly escaped being horse-whipped and ducked in a pond by his indignant neighbours. It must have been a fine sight to see, on Thetford Warren, a drove of perhaps a score great buff-coloured bustards alertly watching for the appearance of the little lizards which scurried among the wiry heath grasses; and in the eighteenth century such a sight was by no means uncommon. But the present dwellers on the borders of this lonesome warren must go a long way if they would see a great bustard in its natural wild state. Since the extermination of the indigenous birds a few foreign migrants have visited England at increasingly long intervals; but in Norfolk and Suffolk they have occurred very rarely, though in 1871 several specimens, supposed to have been driven across the Channel by the heavy cannonading of the Franco-Prussian War, were shot in various parts of the country.

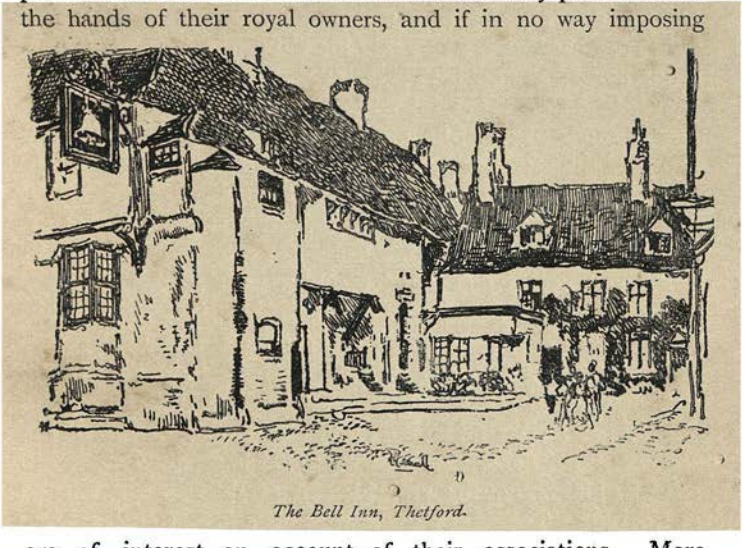
But though the great bustard is gone,* a bird whose habits are not unlike the bustard's still haunts the warren in decreasing numbers. This bird is the thick-knee or stone curlew, which is known in East Anglia as the Norfolk Plover. At times you may see as many as fifty of these birds settle down amid the heath grasses; and if you are careful to remain hidden behind a gorse clump or among the tall bracken you may perhaps be able to watch them for an hour or more. If you use a pair of good field glasses, you may see them go through many interesting antics, some of which will puzzle you; for they will run

* Since the above was written Lord Walsingham has liberated a number of great bustards in East Anglia and has issued an appeal to gunners urging that they may be allowed to breed undisturbed.

swiftly to and fro with neck outstretched, flap or wave their wings in an excited manner, and sometimes leap into the air while waving their wings. They are most active in the evening —during the daytime they often sleep or crouch among the heath grasses, relying on the colour of their plumage to conceal them from their enemies—and when dusk falls you may hear them piping loudly, like boys whistling, as they fly to their feeding grounds in the upland fields. A few of these birds still breed on the warren. If you are lucky you may find their eggs, deposited in a natural depression of the sandy or stony ground. Protective coloration is as evident in the eggs as in the birds themselves, for the colour and markings are so like those of many pebbles that they can hardly be distinguished from them. "Night hawks" is another name for the thick-knees, and has been earned by their shrill cries at night. They are not only harmless, but useful birds, for they destroy large quantities of troublesome insect pests; but the gradual enclosing of heaths and waste lands is slowly but surely driving them from their old haunts, and Thetford Warren is likely to be their last breeding-place in East Anglia.

From the lonesome wildness of this primeval waste I pass with almost startling suddenness into the streets of a town of obvious and impressive antiquity. Thetford, which some have called the "Metropolis of the Heptarchy," is remarkable for its archeological and historical interest, quaint and picturesque buildings, and charming situation in the midst of a district almost entirely unlike any other in East Anglia. It is a border town. As you ramble through its somewhat mazy streets you may easily pass from Norfolk into Suffolk and back again without being aware of it. Its site must, like many a spot in the open country around it, have been occupied by a settlement of Neolithic people; its huge mound, the Castle Hill, dates back to prehistoric times. That the first king of the East Angles made the town

his capital and called it Theodford there is as little doubt as that the Danes and Anglo-Saxons fought here some of their bloodiest battles. So it early bore the title of "royal city," and though it afterwards had to rest content for a while with being a bishop's see, it was from Norman until Stuart times a favourite country seat of English monarchs. The so-called royal palaces, known as the Manor and King's Houses, are preserved in much the same state in which they passed out of the hands of their royal owners, and if in no way imposing



The Bell Inn, Thetford.

are of interest on account of their associations. More especially does this apply to the King's House, which was rebuilt by Queen Elizabeth, and in the reign of James I. was given to Sir Philip Wodehouse in recognition of an ancestor's gallantry at Agincourt. But kings and queens no longer come to Thetford, which, from its size and populousness in the fourteenth century, could maintain twenty churches, has sunk into a state in which it can boast of only three. Its fine Abbey, in which the Dukes of Norfolk—the Bigods, Mowbrays,

and Howards—were for many generations laid to rest, has suffered severely from neglect and vandalism; its Monastery of the Holy Sepulchre, and its Saxon nunnery which Uvius, abbot of Bury, founded to commemorate the battles between the Saxons and Danes, are, at first glance, almost indistinguishable from the modern buildings which have been built of their stones. But the sacrilege of an age which had no respect for these ancient relics has not robbed Thetford of its air of antiquity, which the very stones of its old religious houses, built up, as at Castle Acre, into the walls of otherwise uninteresting houses, do much to preserve.

It is to the Danes and Anglo-Saxons that Thetford owes the most thrilling pages of its history. Those warring races have provided the modern writer on East Anglia's past with abundant real and romantic interest. Around Thetford were fought some of their fiercest fights and performed some of their most daring deeds. That romance has cast a glamour over many a brutal and sordid fact; that monkish craft or credulity has transformed many a plain tale into an impossible legend no one can deny; but as both fact and tale have gained thereby, those of us who love the past for its romance need not complain.

If all the stories told about Edmund, the so-called martyr king of East Anglia, were true we would have good reason to consider him one of the unluckiest monarchs that ever reigned in England. The fates seem ever to have fought against him: even his charitable deeds brought him into trouble. There is an old belief in the northern isles that if you save a man from drowning he will live to do you an injury. Edmund welcomed and treated as an honoured guest a stranger whom the sea cast upon the shore of his realm. One of his servants, envious of the favour shown the stranger, led the latter into the woods and slew him. A garbled account of the murder reached the victim's friends in Denmark, and moved them to invade East Anglia, kill Edmund, and overthrow the dynasty of the East Anglian

kings. At least, so the story goes, and as it is not uninteresting and is part of the early history of Thetford it may be given here.

The beginning of it is told by Roger of Wendover, who got it from some old ballads. He says that in the ninth century there was, in the kingdom of the Danes, a certain king or chieftain named Lodbrog, a name which, Speed informs us, implies that he wore "hairy breeches." He was the father of two sons, Inguar and Ubba. One day he went out hawking near the shore, hoping to capture some of the water-fowl which frequented the coast and islands. While thus engaged, his hawk, in striking down at its quarry, fell into the sea. Anxious to save a favourite bird's life, he put off in a small boat to its rescue. Before he could return to shore a sudden storm arose and carried him out to sea, where he tossed about, at the mercy of wind and wave, for several days. At last he was driven into the mouth of the great East Anglian estuary and succeeded in landing at Reedham, in Norfolk. There he was discovered by some of the people of the place, who, impressed by his comely appearance, conducted him to King Edmund. The king was equally impressed by his involuntary visitor, and when Lodbrog, desirous of acquainting himself with the military methods of the country and acquiring the courtly manners of its king and nobles, asked to be allowed to remain at the court, permission was readily granted. He then sought the companionship of Bern, the king's chief huntsman, and accompanied him when he went out hunting. In all matters pertaining to the chase, however, he soon proved himself Bern's superior, and when the huntsman discovered that the king was rapidly becoming enamoured of his guest his jealousy was aroused and he determined to get rid of his successful rival. An opportunity for doing this occurred one day when they were together in the woods, and Bern attacked Lodbrog, slew him, and hid his body in a thicket. He then called his dogs to him and returned home · but failed to observe that a hound Lodbrog had

trained since he came to Edmund's court kept faithful watch by his master's body.

Next day the king missed Lodbrog from his table, and asked what had become of him. Bern answered that while he and Lodbrog were hunting in the wood he had lost sight of his companion and seen no more of him. While he was speaking, Lodbrog's dog entered the hall and crouched at the feet of the king, who said, "Here is Lodbrog's dog; his master is not far away." He then began to feed the hound, hoping that its master would soon appear; but after satisfying its hunger it returned to its vigil in the wood. Three days later the pangs of hunger again drove it to the king's table; and Edmund, who had become greatly alarmed at his favourite's long absence, ordered that the dog should be followed wherever it went. Some servants followed it into the wood and there discovered Lodbrog's body. On hearing of the discovery, King Edmund was greatly grieved, and having commanded that the body be interred with full honours, caused diligent inquiry to be made as to how Lodbrog had met with his death. Suspicion fell upon Bern, who was eventually convicted of his crime and by order of the "king, captains and wise men of the court" sentenced to be "put into the boat in which Lodbrog had come to England" and "exposed on the sea without sail or oar, that it might be proved whether God would deliver him."

Strangely enough, the boat drifted across to Denmark and was recognised by the Danes, who asked its occupant what had become of their king. The treacherous huntsman, who, no doubt, had prepared his tale as soon as he sighted land, told them that Lodbrog had been cast ashore on the East Anglian coast and there, by order of King Edmund, slain. Their anger aroused by this false story, the Danes determined to avenge Lodbrog's death, and led by Inguar and Ubba, his two sons, and with Bern for a guide, an army of 20,000 men set sail for England. Contrary winds delayed them and drove them out of their course, and at length compelled them to land at

Berwick-on-Tweed. There they slaughtered every one they met, "sparing neither age, sect, nor religious profession"; then they returned home. During the following year, however, they ravaged the East Anglian coast, burned and demolished monasteries, and once besieged King Edmund so long in one of his castles "that the besieged were almost starved. At which time the king, to keep the knowledge thereof from the Danes, caused the only fatted bull which they had in the castle to be fed with what clear wheat they had left, and then to be turned out among the Danes, who seized on him, and opening him, seeing the wheat in his bowels, they concluded they had provision enough in the castle, if they could feed cattle so, and thereupon brake up the siege." A third, fourth, and fifth time the Danes came down upon the coast, until there was hardly a homestead near it that was not laid waste; and when for the sixth time the sails of an invading fleet were sighted the East Angles had almost lost heart and grown weary of fighting for their hearths and homes. At Crowland, Thorney, Peterborough and Ely the monks were driven from their abbeys; and then, Ubba being left at Ely to guard the spoils of war, Inguar, at the head of a large army, marched upon Thetford, where Edmund held his court. When the Danes arrived outside the town, the king was at Hoxne, a few miles away. Before he could return the town was taken and its inhabitants slaughtered. He received from Inguar a message in which the Danish leader promised that if he would make submission and become his vassal he should share his treasure; but Edmund's only answer was to march against his enemies, whom he encountered just outside Thetford, at a place called Snarehill. Here a bloody battle was fought, lasting from dawn till dusk, and there were great losses on both sides. At Snarehill to-day, on the wild heathlands, you may see the huge mounds which cover the bones of the slain. On the morning after the battle the Danes retreated; but being reinforced by Ubba, who with 10,000 men had made a

forced march from Ely, Inguar returned to the attack, and engaging Edmund's broken army at Hoxne, totally defeated it, and captured its leader. Speed says that Edmund "yielded himself to their torments to save more Christian blood; for it is recorded that because of his most constant faith and profession those pagans first beat him with bats, then scourged him with whips, he still calling on the name of Jesus, for rage whereof they bound him to a stake, and with their arrows shot him to death, and, cutting off his head, contemptuously threw it into a bush." So it was he came to be known as King Edmund the Martyr; and at Hoxne you may see a stone cross which stands, it is said, where stood the tree to which he was bound when he met his death.

That the battle at Snarehill was looked upon as a terrible encounter even in those days of "bloody battles, ravage, and rapine" is very clear, for more than a century later, when King Canute, the most powerful monarch of his time, reigned over England, Uvius, the abbot of St. Edmundsbury, founded a monastery near the battlefield in memory of the men, both Danes and Angles, who fell on that dreadful day. The conventual church of that monastery is now a barn; but St. Benet's Abbey was made into a windmill, and why should a Thetford farmer have more respect for one Saxon shrine than the men of the marshes had for another? The East Anglian farmers discovered long ago that old churches make excellent barns. As to the Snarehill battle-field, Dr. Raven, in his *History of Suffolk*, says that "no permanent mark of the struggle remains, save, perhaps, that not far off is the base of one of those wayside crosses which showed the pilgrim's track to St. Edmundsbury or Walsingham. The scream of the stone curlew and the broken whistle of the lapwing still ring ..... in the ears of those that pass that way. The rabbit's active feet construct his tunnels among the furze, which often takes toll in the shape of tufts of his grey or white fur. The wheatear lays her greenish-blue eggs and brings off her young brood.

No longer, indeed, does the stately bustard stalk over these broad stretches of free warren, and show that glory of fawn colour which England is never like to see again save in museums. Otherwise all is unchanged, and no great effort of the imagination peoples the scene with Dane and Angle met in mortal fray."

How Edmund was avenged is not an East Anglian story, but may be told here as a fitting climax to that of the martyred king. The Rev. S. Baring-Gould tells it in his *Book of the West.* "Hingvar and Hubba (Inguar and Ubba) were provided by their sisters with an ensign before starting, on which, with their needles they had wrought the figure of a raven in symbol of the carnage that their brothers were to cause in revenge of the death of their father. Hingvar and Hubba in 866 ravaged East Anglia and Mercia; they wintered in Essex, and in 867 crossed the Humber and took York. In 868 they devastated as far as Nottingham. In 870 Edmund fell. Every successive year was marked by fire and slaughter. In 876 the Danes were at Exeter, and again in 877. In the winter of 878 Hubba came with twenty-three ships and the raven standard into the estuary of the Taw and Torridge and landed at Appledore. Here the men of Devon were encamped at Kenwith, now Henny Castle, north-west of Bideford, where earthworks remain to this day in the wood. The Danes attacked the camp, and were repulsed, with the loss of twelve hundred men and their raven banner. Hubba was also slain. He was buried on the shore near his ships, and a pile of stones was thrown over him. This place bears the name of Whibble-stone or Hubbastone, but all traces of the cairn have disappeared, swept away by the encroachment of the sea. So the men of Devon avenged the blood of S. Edmund and of the men of Mercia and East Anglia."

The Thetford of the past had not only many churches but a considerable number of monastic houses. Of some of these

all traces have vanished; while of the rest, with one exception, the remains are very scanty. The exception is the abbey founded by Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk. This house, which was one of the most richly endowed in England, was founded on the Suffolk side of the river; but finding the site inconvenient, the Earl ordered that a new building be erected on the Norfolk side, and, with enterprise worthy of the organisers of a modern charity, took advantage of the presence of Henry I., whose court was being held at Thetford, by persuading him to lay the foundation stone. An institution thus started could not, in those days, fail to prosper, and Thetford Abbey soon became possessed of vast revenues. The Bigods, Mowbrays, and Howards lavished wealth upon it and made it their burial-place. At the time of its suppression it contained the tombs and monuments of many famous men. Among them was one to the memory of that Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk, who by bringing up at a critical moment Lord Dacre's Horse, and surrounding King James's battalion, won for the English the Battle of Flodden Field. The home of that famous soldier, whose father had died while fighting for the Usurper at Bosworth, was the grand old castle at Framlingham, which had been the seat of the Earls and Dukes of Norfolk since the beginning of the twelfth century; and it was from that castle that, on a certain day in June, 1524, a funeral procession set out, which, in consequence of its public and imposing character, has been compared with that of the Duke of Wellington. For the nation admired the victor of Flodden as greatly as it did the hero of Waterloo, and when he went the way of all flesh it did its utmost to prove how much it held him in honour and mourned his loss. While his body lay in state three masses were daily sung for him, and every night twelve knights, twelve yeomen, two yeomen ushers, and two gentlemen ushers kept watch beside it. When brought out of the private chapel, it was placed on a gorgeously

decorated chariot drawn by horses which each wore four large escutcheons, including a small one "beaten in oil with fine gold." Six gentlemen and six knights acted as attendants and bearers, and the chariot was also attended by four hundred men who carried burning torches. The journey from Framlingham to Thetford, a distance of thirty-six miles, was performed in two days. The procession on both days was of almost regal magnificence. Three coaches of friars led the way, closely followed by a standard-bearer, a banner-bearer, the Windsor Herald, the King of Arms, and the Garter King of Arms, "all of whom rode in their liveries of black, their hoods on their heads, their horses trapped, &c., and on every one of them four escutcheons of the Duke's arms." Following the funeral car were the chief mourners, among them Howards, Fitzwalters, Willoughbys, Boleyns, and lords, knights, and gentlemen to the number of nine hundred. At every town and village through which the procession passed the clergy conducted services, and every church received five escutcheons of the deceased's arms. At Diss a halt was made for the night, the "noble corpse" being placed in the church, where a similar watch was kept over it as at Framlingham.

Shortly after six o'clock next morning the heralds re-marshalled the procession and the journey was continued to Thetford, like ceremonies being observed at every town and village as on the previous day. A little way out of Thetford the cortège was met by four orders of friars, who conducted it to the Abbey Church, into which the coffin was borne by twelve knights and twelve gentlemen and placed on a bier adorned with seven hundred lights; and again a solemn night-watch was kept. Early next morning the mourners and all the "states" assembled at the church to take part in the burial ceremony. The first mass was sung by the Prior of Butley, the second by the Abbot of Windham, and the high mass of requiem by the Bishop of Ely. In addition to those dignitaries there were present and assisting, the priors of

Dodenash and Woodbridge, the abbots of Thetford and Whittle; and Dr. Mackerell, who preached the funeral sermon. The high mass of requiem was followed by the offering of silver to the church, to the keeping of which were entrusted the Duke's coat of arms, target, sword, helmet, crest, and axe. The axe was brought to the church door by a knight wearing the Duke's armour and mounted on a horse decked with cloth of gold. Then the body was lowered into the tomb, the Bishop of Ely conducting the service, which concluded with the customary ceremonies, such as the breaking of staves over and the pouring of holy water into the grave. A grand funeral feast of four hundred dishes, costing £1,340, was then partaken of, and the three hundred priests who had held mass in the Abbey and other churches each received twelve pence and his dinner.

Like many other East Anglian towns Thetford possesses one of those mysterious mounds or earthworks whose origin is such a puzzle to antiquaries. In many respects it closely resembles those at Norwich, Castle Acre, and Castle Rising, on which the Earls Bigod, D'Albini, and De Warrenne built their strongholds; but though it is called the "Castle Hill" there is no indication that it was ever the site of a castle. Local theories as to the origin of these mounds are always interesting, and when I read concerning the Castle Hill that "the balance of probability appears to be with those who hold that it is a memorial mound, resembling, as it does, the mount of Alyattes on the Tmolus ridge in Asia Minor, and the tumuli of Odin, Thor, and Freya, at Upsala," I feel a sincere admiration for the local imagination. Yet one cannot wonder that imagination should inspire, even to wild excesses, the inhabitants of this quaint old town; for it is such an ancient place that its records, old as they are, only carry us back to times which, in view of its prehistoric mound and the grass-grown barrows on its heaths, must be considered comparatively recent. So there is wide scope left for that fanciful faculty of

the mind which attributes the mazy windings of the Thetford streets to the tortuous routes of the Ancient British trackways which led down to the river, peoples the wild wastes of warren with the phantoms of by-gone warlike races, and finds in the Castle Hill the grave-heap of some unknown Icenic king.

Thetford is almost surrounded by heaths and warrens, and on one of these tracts of waste land not far from the Bury road I come upon a party of encamped gipsies. It consists of about half-a-dozen persons in all, and some of them, I find, are genuine Romanies. Three brightly-painted travelling vans, a ramshackle cart, and a couple of dingy kraal-shaped tents comprise their laager; half-a-dozen horses of somewhat starved appearance graze on the browning bent grasses. A wood fire smoulders in front of one of the tents; the odour of its smoke, mingled with the scent of sun-scorched gorse, pervades the whole camp. I recognise in one of the gipsies an old acquaintance. He is a *griengro* or horse-dealer whom I have met once or twice near the Suffolk coast, and who usually confines his wanderings to the Eastern counties. A tall, slim, sinewy rover, of middle-age, with swarthy complexion and keen restless eyes, one can easily believe what is said of him: that twenty years ago he was a clever boxer and step-dancer, capable of holding his own among pugilistic and terpsichorean experts. Now he is content to rest on his laurels; that is, unless he is unlucky enough to have a little disagreement with the police, when he proves that he has not forgotten how to force home an argument and use his hands in self-defence. His wife is about the same age as he, but looks fifteen years older. Her hair, once of raven blackness, is plentifully streaked with grey; her back is bowed by the weight of the wicker basket full of knick-knacks she generally carries slung on her shoulder; her face is wrinkled, her eyes sunken, and her few remaining teeth are stained with tobacco juice to the yellowish hue of her hollow cheeks. Yet

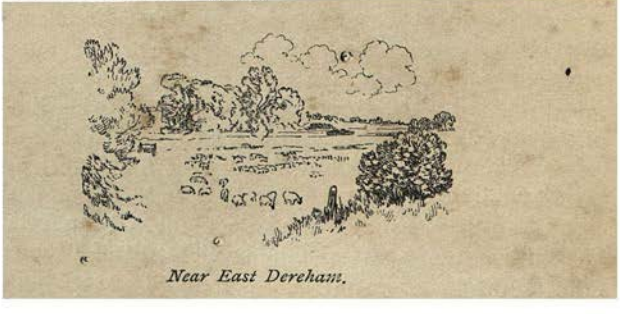
she is quite as active as her Romany spouse, and probably does more work in a day than he in a week, for, like most Romany *chals*, her husband prefers to use his wits rather than his hands in gaining a livelihood. Even in this she often excels him, and by *penning dukkerins* (telling fortunes) at back doors during the daytime and in her caravan at night will often in a few hours do more to replenish the family exchequer than he will do by a profitable "deal" at a horse-fair.

The man is driving towards the camp a horse which has strayed on to the highway; but as soon as he sees me he leaves the horse to crop the brown bents and comes towards me. "Do you remember that bit of a buffle I had with the policeman at L—?" he asks, when I have joined the party gathered round the camp fire. I recollect the "buffle" quite well; also the success of the scheme, concocted because the gipsy was more sinned against than sinning, by which he escaped the clutches of the law. We enjoy a laugh over our reminiscences while a dusky-haired girl prepares a cup of tea and sets it before me with a plate of gipsy cake. "So you've took to the road, as you often said you'd like to!" continues my swarthy friend. "How long will it be before you're tired of sleeping under a strange roof every night?" I assure him that while I can spend the days as I am now doing I shall care little where I spend the nights; but he shakes his head doubtingly: evidently he sets small value on my avowed inclinations towards a roving life. We speak of the gradual disappearance of the real Romanies from the roads and heaths of rural England, and of the increasing difficulty with which those who remain manage to gain a livelihood—subjects we have discussed before in the shelter of an East Suffolk copse within hearing of the surging of the sea. I learn that there are very few gipsy families in the country whose blood is not mixed with that of the house-dwellers, and that county and parish councils, by forbidding encamping on the waste lands which were formerly free to all

comers, are making it harder than ever for the surviving Romanies to exist. I can see that these changes are very unwelcome to the *griengro*, who has never yet spent a night under a house-roof, and in his early days often made his bed on a couch of bracken and slept under the sky's wide star-gemmed canopy. Although my companion and some of his friends are true Romanies, I listen in vain to hear them use some of the words which are left of the language of the first Romany wanderers from the Far East. Old Mother Grey, who until a few years ago was well-known all over East Anglia, could *rokker Romany* with amazing fluency—she was nearly eighty years old when I last met her, and for all I know her roamings may be for ever at an end. The Romanies here have forgotten—or profess to have forgotten—that their grandfathers' called horses *gries*, and though they speak depreciatingly of house-dwellers never call them *kair-engres*. True, a touzle-headed youth who is lolling against the steps of a van, teazing an equally touzle-headed girl, makes use of the word "gorger," which may be the *gorgio* of George Borrow and the *gaujoe* of Mr. Hindes Groome; but I have heard the derisive term applied by one house-dweller to another, and doubt whether it is more Romany than slang.

I am much tempted to become a gipsy for one night, and find out how it feels to sleep on a bed of bracken, with a horse-cloth for my coverlet and a rolled-up coat for my pillow. Then, perhaps, I might enjoy for a while what Emerson calls an "original relation to the universe," and better understand how much there is in life a man can easily dispense with, and what it is that makes the Romany cling to his roving life. As an Englishman, I am inclined to boast that I can adapt myself to hard circumstances. I tell myself that if a British soldier can sleep soundly on the open veldt, in the midst of an African mid-winter rainstorm, surely I can be content and comfortable on an English heath on a warm summer night. But I remember that I have still a long journey before me and cannot afford to run

the risks of unaccustomed exposure to the night dews, so having drunk a cup of the black tea in which the Romany delights, and finished my plate of gipsy cake, I bid my roving friends good-bye. I confess I am loth to leave them so soon, for I love to hear them talk—as they will if you have their confidence—of their Arabic existence and its attendant pleasures and hardships, of their successes in disposing of doctored horses—if a horse has one lame foreleg, drive a nail through the hoof into the hock of the other and it will pick up its feet as daintily as a colt—and the strange credulity of the country folk with whom they have dealings. On this last subject I have often discoursed with them, and have been surprised to discover how grudgingly the rustic mind admits that there is nothing supernatural or mysterious in the garrulous forecastings of the shrewd old gipsy crones. Even the *griengro* himself, while his mother was alive, would sometimes consult her before starting on a fresh journey or concluding the purchase of a horse. I would like to ascertain the extent of *his* credulity; but I know from previous experience that however willing he may be to speak of that of other people he is very chary of referring to his own. So, having expressed a hope that it may not be long before our wanderings again bring us in touch with each other, and having again been reminded of that "bit of a buffle" with the policeman, I make my way out of the rovers' camp.



Near East Dereham.

Bury St. Edmunds.

CHAPTER XIII

BLOOMFIELD'S COUNTRY AND BURY ST. EDMUNDS

NOWADAYS one seldom hears the name of Robert Bloomfield, whose sad life-story seems fated to be numbered among the world's forgotten tragedies. Thirty or forty years ago hardly any rural social gathering in Suffolk was considered a complete success unless at some point of the proceedings someone read or recited a poem composed by the Honington tailor's son. *The Farmer's Boy*, *The Horkey*, and *Fair Day* are compositions which then appealed to the rustic mind. Their language is that of the field and farmyard; their humour that of the annual fair and village club. Bloomfield at eleven years of age was himself a farmer's boy. He knew what it meant to rise from his bed at the chill dark hour before a winter's day-dawn, creep down stairs from a bare-floored attic, and with frost-bitten hands chop swedes in a byre. He early learnt that the farm-hand's life is largely made up of labour and sorrow, and

little wonder would it have been if he had grown up callous and selfish; but though he tasted few of the sweets of life, and in the end died in poverty, he never let toil or trouble close his eyes to the beauty, his ears to the bird-music of his native woods and fields, or deaden his sympathy for his rustic neighbours. To his love for a country life, and sympathy for those who had to live that life under hard conditions, Suffolk owes some ballads which, in spite of their curious colloquialisms, should be better appreciated centuries hence than they are to-day. By that time the local ballads of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be valued as we value those of the fourteenth and fifteenth. Bloomfield, however, did not die without having had his talent recognised, nor without having won his way to the hearts of those for whom he chiefly wrote—the simple country folk of his native county. Whether he believed the fame he attained would prove a lasting one, I know not; but if he could have lived thirty years longer it would have gladdened his heart to note the hush that fell upon a rustic audience, and the strained attention with which it listened, when some one arose and began to recite

> "Come, Goody, stop your humdrum wheel,
> Sweep up your orts, and get your hat;
> Old joys revived once more I feel:
> 'Tis Fair-day—aye, and more than that.
>
> "Have you forgot, Kate, prithee say,
> How many seasons here we've tarried?
> 'Tis forty years this very day
> Since you and I, old girl, were married."

Men who swung the scythe in the corn from dusk till dawn, and women who laboured with them in the hot fields all day, could enter into the feelings of the bent and wrinkled old "gaffer" when, on remembering that it was fair day, and the anniversary of his wedding-day, his thoughts wandered back through a wearisome succession of sad grey days to that sunny one when he led his laughing, rosy-cheeked Kate from the

church porch to the village fair. They could understand how it was that the old man wished to go to a fair once more; for fair day was one of the few rural festivals which banished for a time from the farm-hand's mind all thoughts of his monotonous calling and reminded him of the joys of youth. A smile which was not all mirthful would hover round their lips when the reciter went on:

"When once a giggling mawther you,
And I a red-faced, chubby boy,
Sly tricks you play'd me, not a few,
For mischief was your greatest joy.

"Once passing by this very tree,
A gotch of milk I'd been to fill;
You shoulder'd me, then laugh'd to see
Me and my gotch spin down the hill."

Old Richard and Goody Kate, dressed in their worn and faded "Sunday-best," at length reach the fair ground. They are greeted by many of their children and grand-children. "Didn't I tell you they'd be here?" They are in time to see the "dickey" races, "more famed for laughter than for speed."

"Richard looked on with wondrous glee,
And praised the lad who chanced to win;
'Kate, wa'n't I such a one as he?
As like him, ay, as pin to pin.'

"'Full fifty years have passed away
Since I rode this same ground about;
Lord! I was lively as the day,
I won the high-lows out and out!

"'I'm surely growing young again,
I feel myself so kedge and plump;
From head to foot I've not one pain;
Nay, hang me if I couldn't jump!'"

But Goody Kate has grown wiser since the days when mischief was her greatest joy, and, recognising that the "ale in

Richard's pate" is responsible for his youthful feelings, reminds him that he promised to return home early in the evening in order that the "childer" might have a chat with them about old times. So they stroll along the old familiar footpaths through the fields and meadows—the Ten Acres and Home Fields they had laboured in when the blood coursed freely through their veins and "rheumatics" were unknown to them —and under a gnarled old tree on their village green they and their sons and daughters quaff a farewell quart together. Meanwhile

> "The children toppled on the green,
> And bowled their fairings down the hill;
> Richard with pride beheld the scene
> And could not for his life sit still."

He is compelled to give rein to his feelings, and out of the fullness of his heart he speaks:

> "'Through all my days I've laboured hard,
> And could of pains and crosses tell;
> But this is labour's great reward,
> To meet ye thus, and see ye well.
>
> "'My good old Partner, when at home,
> Sometimes with wishes mingles tears;
> Goody, says I, let what wool come,
> We've nothing for them but our pray'rs.
>
> "'May you be all as old as I,
> And see your sons to manhood grow;
> And many a time before you die
> Be just as pleased as I am now.'
>
> "Then (raising still his mug and voice),
> 'An old man's weakness don't despise;
> I love you well, my girls and boys;
> God bless you all!' so said his eyes—
>
> "For as he spoke a big round drop
> Fell bounding on his ample sleeve,
> A witness which he could not stop,
> A witness which all hearts believe."

And then

> " With thankful hearts and strengthen'd love,
> The poor old pair, supremely blest,
> Saw the sun sink behind the grove,
> And gain'd once more their lowly rest."

Why am I thinking of Robert Bloomfield and quoting so freely from his half-forgotten rhymes? Because I am in the midst of the scenes from which he drew his inspiration. It was at Honington, a little village not far from the Bury road, that he was born; at Sapiston, an adjoining hamlet, that he worked on a farm; and at Troston, near by, that he found in Mr. Capel Lofft a friend and patron. Euston Hall, the seat of the Duke of Grafton (who also came to the poet's aid and found him employment in the Seal Office), stands in a large, well-wooded park not far from Thetford; Fakenham Wood, once the largest wood in the country and a favourite haunt of Bloomfield, who made it the scene of his ballad *The Fakenham Ghost*, closely skirts the bounds of Euston Park. Along the road I am now travelling young Bloomfield often trudged, wearily, for his body was always frail and unfit to endure the hardships and exposure of field work, yet happily, being lost in daydreams which made him unconscious of his weariness. Duty or, far less frequently, pleasure, sometimes took him to Thetford; and as he crossed the wild warrens he would muse over the " Danish mounds of partial green," which

> Far o'er the bleak unwooded scene
> Proclaim their wondrous length of days."

Or he would ponder by the banks of Barnham Water until the twilight deepened into dusk, and the stone curlews, deserting their daytime haunts on the heathlands, flew whistling over him to their nightly feeding grounds in the Euston fields. Unlike Crabbe, his contemporary Suffolk poet, he was a self-taught man. Although his mother for a while kept a dame's school, he was sent to work on the land before he was old

enough to benefit by her instruction. An ear "attuned to harmony," and a natural aptitude for correct and melodious expression, compensated largely for his lack of bookish knowledge; but in the course of his rural ramblings and twilight musings he must often have found his thoughts too deep for words, and lamented that he had not a wider view of life to give his spirit wings.

But Bloomfield had the true poetic instinct which, combined with his intimate knowledge of the Suffolk rustics and the conditions under which they lived, enabled him to find subjects for his muse even in a few almost unknown hamlets. In this he had the advantage of such casual visitors to the district as I, who, unless I stay here long enough to become acquainted with some of its inhabitants, can hardly hope to find a theme here for my discursive pen. For, apart from its warrens, Bloomfield's native country possesses no features of interest which are not common almost everywhere else in East Anglia. Having discovered this, without pausing in my journey I ride on through Ingham to Fornham, where, if the historians of the twelfth century had had any consideration for the tourists of the nineteenth, there ought to be something to delay me. But of the Battle of Fornham and the disposition of the forces engaged in it we know little. It seems to have been an internecine conflict, in which one of the contending parties sought the aid and relied on the valour of foreign mercenaries. That invoker of alien aid was a certain Robert de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester, who had quarrelled with King Henry II. and fled from England. He crossed over to the Low Countries and stayed there until he heard that Henry's sons had risen against their father—news which suggested to him that the time for his revenge had come. In order to obtain it he engaged the services of a body of Flemings, with whom he set sail for England. Landing near Felixstowe he at once made his way to Framlingham Castle, where he found Hugh Bigod, the rebel Earl of Norfolk,

ready to join him in fighting against the king. Before matching their strength with that of any considerable body of loyal troops, however, the rebel earls laid siege to Haughley Castle, then held for the king by a certain Ranulph de Broc. The castle they stormed and destroyed; but when they started for St. Edmundsbury, which they proposed to visit on their way to Leicester, they soon realised that their success at Haughley was to be their only one. For when they got as far as Fornham they encountered Richard de Lucy, the Chief Justice; Humphrey de Bohun, certain other barons, and a large loyalist army. Exactly what happened then it is impossible now to discover; but in all probability a short but sharp battle was fought, in which the rebels were routed. The fighting, we are told, took place on the right bank of the little river Lark, where numerous skeletons have been unearthed and have been accepted by no less an authority than Carlyle as conclusive evidence of the truth of the statement. "For the river Lark," says the Chelsea sage, "though not very discoverably, still runs or stagnates in that country, and the battle-ground is there; serving at present as a pleasure-ground to his Grace of Northumberland. Copper pennies of Henry II. are still found there;—rotted out from the pouches of poor slain soldiers, who had not had time to buy liquor with them. In the river Lark itself was fished up, within man's memory, an antique gold ring; which fond Dilettantism can almost believe may have been the very ring Countess Leicester threw away, in her flight, in that same Lark river, or ditch. Nay, few years ago, in tearing out an enormous superannuated ash-tree, now grown quite corpulent, bursten, superfluous, but long a fixture in the soil, and not to be dislodged without revolution —there was laid bare, under its roots, a circular mound of skeletons wonderfully complete, all radiating from a centre, faces upwards, feet inwards; a radiation not of Light, but of the Nether Darkness rather; and evidently the fruit of battle, for many of the heads were cleft, or had arrow holes in them!

The Battle of Fornham, therefore, is a fact, though a forgotten one; no less obscure than undeniable—like so many other facts." But though Carlyle was content to accept the evidence of the skeletons as proving that a battle was fought here in the twelfth century, other writers are less sure of the value of the evidence, and assert that the mounds, of which there are several in the neighbourhood, are nothing more nor less than Ancient British barrows. A similar origin is assigned to seven hills which were formerly said to mark the burial-places of seven barons killed in the fight.

My first impression of Bury St. Edmunds is that it should be a cathedral town. In the days of Herfast, the first Norman bishop of East Anglia, there was just a chance that the see might be removed from Elmham to St Edmundsbury; but the abbot of the monastery here, fearing that the privileges of his house might be endangered by the change, made a pilgrimage to Rome and implored the Pope not to make the town the episcopal centre of the great Eastern diocese. In what way the monastery would have suffered, it is difficult now to imagine; but evidently there was something in the abbot's plea, for the Pope not only granted it, but confirmed "for all time" the monastery's privileges. So St. Edmundsbury was, by the action of its own abbot, debarred from having a bishop of its own; and if its abbey gardens and the old square in front of the abbey gate remind one of a cathedral close, it is of a close which, although it contains two churches, lacks a cathedral. It seems to me the model of what an English country town should be. Its streets are wider than those of Thetford and Ely—wider, even, than many of the chief thoroughfares in Norwich and Ipswich; its houses are substantial and imposing, and the whole town wears an aspect suggesting comfortable circumstances. One can hardly imagine that the dwellers in the solid, many-windowed eighteenth century private houses which border the squares and main streets are

people who leave their homes in the morning and spend the day at counter or desk; rather, one would say, they are rural deans with antiquarian tastes, superannuated colonels and admirals, retired city merchants, and maiden ladies of uncertain age but unmistakable respectability, all of whom have settled down in Bury because they can here enjoy rural delights and, at the same time, urban advantages. Mingled with the fragrance of the old-fashioned flowers in the public and private gardens is that of the new-mown hay in the meadows beyond the Lark; cuckoos call within a hundred yards of the market-place, and thistledown from the neighbouring country roadsides is blown along the quiet streets. "The beauty of this town," wrote Defoe, "consists in the number of gentry who dwell in and near it, the polite conversation among them, the affluence and plenty they live in, the sweet air they breathe in, and the pleasant country they have to go abroad in." Defoe's idea of the elements of beauty does not wholly commend itself; but I agree with him as to the sweetness of the air one breathes here and the quiet charm of the surrounding country. The monks for whom King Sigebert established the first monastery here were eminently favoured, and even if the wonderful circumstances attending the death of King Edmund had not changed the name of the places from Beodricsworth to St. Edmundsbury, and attracted to it a host of pilgrims, their monastery ought to have flourished and become famous. Even without the aid of the sacred relique in St. Edmund's shrine, they ought to have succeeded in making known to the world the fact that their house at Beodricsworth stood in a fruitful land, and was far more easily accessible than that of Ely; that the breezy uplands sloping down to the clear fish-stocked rivulet of Lark were much pleasanter than the mist-mantled isle of the fens.

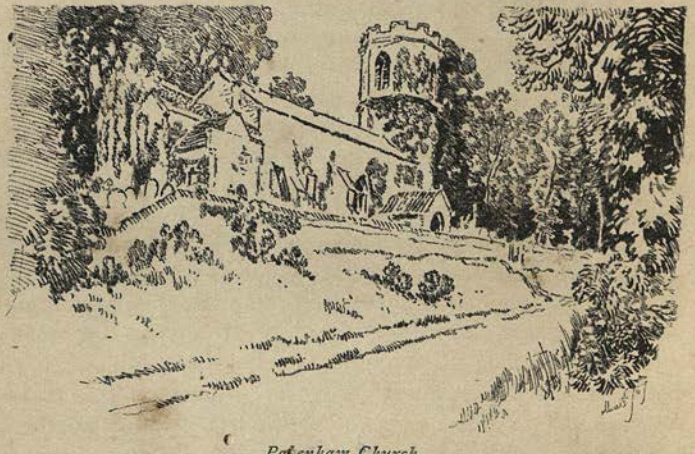
But the martyrdom of Edmund, to whom Beodric had bequeathed his manor, was followed by an occurrence so strange as to dispel from the monks of Beodricsworth any fears they may have entertained as to the future of their monastery. In

writing of Thetford I told the story of Edmund's defeat, capture, and martyrdom. When I stand before the grand old abbey gate on Angel Hill I am naturally reminded of the sequel to that story. After the battle at Hoxne the Danes departed, leaving Edmund's headless body fastened by cords and arrows to a tree. There, it was discovered by some of the dead king's followers, who, when the country was clear of their victorious enemies, crept back to the battle-field to bury the bodies of the slain. Edmund's body they buried in a small chapel near by. Then they went in search of the severed head, and after forty days' searching, were guided by a voice crying, "Here, here, here!" to a thicket, where it was found between the paws of a wolf. The beast offered no resistance to their taking it, and when they had done so disappeared into a wood. This "unkouth thing, and strange ageyn nature" caused the Saxons to marvel greatly; but a greater wonder followed. When the head was carried to the chapel and interred, it became joined again to the body, leaving only a faint red line to mark where it had been cut off. Other miracles having been wrought by and in connection with the body, it was, in 903, translated to Beodricsworth, where a wooden shrine had been prepared for it. From that time forward Beodric's manor was known as St. Edmundsbury, and a new religious house, founded to the honour of God and the martyred king, soon became one of the chief pilgrim resorts, and in wealth, magnificence, and influence second only to that of Glastonbury.

Before St. Edmund's body had long occupied its new shrine the Danes, who had only retired temporarily from this part of East Anglia, again became troublesome, and once it was found necessary to remove the treasured relique to London in order to preserve it. But it was brought back when the Danes ceased from troubling, and a certain Ailwyn, who was its chief guardian, built a stone church to replace the wooden one which had previously contained it. This church did not please Baldwin, the first Norman abbot, who had it pulled

down, and erected the one of which there were considerable portions left at the time of the Dissolution. Of its holy relique the monks had many wonderful tales to tell the pilgrims who came to worship it. One of these related to the death of King Sweyn, who had threatened to destroy St. Edmundsbury and all its inhabitants. When he set out from Gainsborough with the intention of carrying out his threat, St. Edmund appeared to him, riding "in full harness and with a spear in his hands." Terror seized upon him, and he cried loudly for help; but the phantom king rode him down, thrust him through with his sword, wounding him so sorely that, after lingering a few hours in fearful agony, he died. Whether St. Edmund's body remained at Bury long after the death of King John is doubtful. Matthew Paris would have it that when Louis the Dauphin despoiled the chief towns in the Eastern counties he carried the body away with him and found a new resting-place for it at Toulouse. This he would have little difficulty in doing, for it had miraculously continued in such a remarkable state of preservation that at one time a woman named Oswin used to comb its hair and pare its nails every Maundy Thursday. But with the exception of Matthew Paris, the chroniclers are silent about any such removal, and as the French inventory upon which Matthew Paris relied contained many very remarkable items we are quite justified in doubting its veracity. However it may be, there is a long passage by Jocelyn of Brakelond, quoted and translated by Carlyle in *Past and Present*, which goes to show that the body was safe and *sound* at Bury at the end of the twelfth century. Indeed, of the history of the abbey during the last quarter of that century and the beginning of the thirteenth we have a "record rare" in the writings of this Jocelyn of Brakelond, who was a native of Bury and an inmate of the abbey. Carlyle calls him a kind of born Boswell, though an infinitesimally small one; his Johnson was Abbot Sampson, who presided over the monastery from 1173 to 1202.

It was, according to Jocelyn, on the eve of the fourth day of the Festival of St. Edmund that Abbot Sampson called together the sacristan, medicus, and certain others of the brethren of the monastery, and confided to them that he wished to look for once upon the body of the martyred king. Accordingly at midnight, when the rest of the monks were asleep, these chosen few assembled in the abbey church and, in the presence of the abbot, proceeded to open the shrine. From its interior they took the loculus, which they placed on



Pakenham Church.

a table. Having removed the lid they found that St. Edmund's head was still united to his body and raised on a small pillow. A silk veil and a linen cloth "of wondrous whiteness" enshrouded the whole body, which was also closely wrapped in linen. These wrappings the Abbot refused to have removed, saying that he feared to look upon the body's naked flesh. He took the head, however, between his hands, and prayed that the glorious martyr would not "turn to his perdition" the fact that he, though mean and sinful, had dared to touch his holy body, adding that the saint knew how sincere was his

love and how devout his mind. He then touched the eyes of the wonderful corpse, the nose, which, according to the chronicler, was its most striking feature; the breast and arms; and placed his fingers between the sacred fingers. The feet he found pointing stiffly upwards, like those of a man but newly dead, and he was able to count their toes. Having satisfied himself that the body was miraculously preserved, he called the rest of the monks present forward, so that they might be able to testify to what they had seen. And they all saw the wonder, and one of them, a man of great courage known as Turstan the Little, dared to touch the saint's knees and feet; while John of Dice (who, I fancy, must have been a monk from Diss) who, Jocelyn says, was sitting on the roof of the church, peeped through a hole or window and "clearly saw all these things." But Jocelyn, as he himself admits, was not among the favoured few who accompanied the Abbot into the church that night, nor did he, like John of Dice, climb on to the roof and peep through a hole; yet it is Jocelyn who, with plenty of local colour and convincing details, relates the Abbot's proceedings. He adds that when, at matins next morning, the news of what had been done spread among the monks there was great lamentation, not that the saint's body had been disturbed, but that so few of them had been permitted to see it. But Abbot Sampson, when matins were over, called them together and explained that it would not have been fitting that they should all have seen the uncovering of the body; and hearing this the monks wept, but at the same time managed to sing the *Te Deum*.

He was an enterprising monk, this Abbot Sampson, and even if he had not re-awakened interest in St. Edmund's shrine, and so, no doubt, brought an increasing number of pilgrims to it and swelled the coffers of the monastery, he would have made a name for himself by the stir he caused when he reduced the monks' rations in order that he might save enough money to restore the abbey and build churches

and barns. Although the monks refused to admit it, there was some excuse for the economy which kept an eye on the cellarer and a tight girdle around shrunken waists, for Abbot Sampson's predecessor, Abbot Hugo, had been so deeply in the Jews' debt that he had had to pledge the vessels and ornaments of the shrine. Yet when distinguished visitors came to St. Edmundsbury no one was readier than Abbot Sampson to provide good sport for them. In the parks which he had laid out and stocked with animals, and in the woods belonging to the abbey, he would organise great huntings, and himself, though he never hunted, come out to watch the sport. Yet, though he entertained royalty royally he was not a man to submit to royal dictation when he believed that right was on his side. Of this we have an instance in his defiance of Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who would have had him give to one of his (the king's) nobles a ward whose hand he had already granted to one whom he believed would prove a fitting spouse. To the king's first letter he replied with humility; but when Richard began to bluster and threaten him with all sorts of pains and penalties if he refused to obey him his strength of character revealed itself. The king, he said, might carry away the ward by force; he might even, if he chose, destroy the abbey; but rather than do a thing he believed to be wrong, and which would establish a dangerous precedent, possibly to the detriment of his successors in the office of abbot, he would endure all things. On hearing this the king was greatly enraged, and swore to be revenged upon the stubborn abbot; but when his temper cooled, and he recognised that the "proud priest" was in the right, he not only forgave the stubbornness, but loved the monk. And a short time afterwards, when he wanted one or two dogs of a breed for which St. Edmundsbury was renowned, he wrote to Abbot Sampson concerning them, and the abbot sent him the best dogs he could find, and received in return a ring which had been given to the king by Pope Innocent the Third.

The worthy Abbot was a great reformer, and had he lived a few years longer might have had a share in bringing about a far greater reform than any he was able to accomplish, namely, the extorting from King John of Magna Charta. For it was in connection with the granting of the great charter of liberties that a momentous incident occurred at St. Edmundsbury Abbey. It came about in this way. King John had returned from France, smarting under the defeat of his army near Lisle, and was venting his spleen on all and sundry in the way that had gained him his unenviable reputation. The Barons, tired of his tyranny, had already entered into a league with Cardinal Langton, and, knowing that the king would attend the Feast of St. Edmund, determined to present themselves at the abbey and there demand their rights. The feast day arrived, and with it the barons, who, according to some authorities, stood face to face with the king who had recently proclaimed his intention of ruling his realm in his own way, in defiance of all men. It was a memorable scene. Before an august assembly in the fine old church Abbot Baldwin had built, Cardinal Langton arose and read, amidst loud acclamations, the proposed charter of liberties. Then, standing before the high altar, he received the protestations of the barons, who one by one advanced, placed their hands upon the altar, and solemnly swore that unless the king granted them the charter they would unite against him, arm their retainers, and fight until they gained their ends. Having taken this oath they appointed twenty-five of their number to lay the charter before the king. It was an event of which this old town may well be proud, and it is not surprising that to the ruins of Abbot Baldwin's church two tablets are affixed, one bearing the names of the twenty-five barons, the other this inscription:

> "Where the rude buttress totters to its fall,
> And ivy mantles o'er the crumbling wall;
> Where e'en the skilful eye can scarcely trace
> The once High Altar's lowly resting place—

Let patriotic fancy muse a while
Amid the ruins of this ancient pile.
Six weary centuries have passed away;
Palace and Abbey moulder in decay;
Cold death enshrouds the learned and the brave;
Langton—FitzWalter—slumber in the grave;
But still we read in deathless records how
The high-souled Priest confirmed the Barons' vow;
And Freedom, unforgetful, still recites
This second birthplace of our Native Rights."

Thus St. Edmundsbury Abbey became a part of English history, and not only at the time of the barons' meeting, but on several other occasions, when Parliament was held within its walls. It was while attending Parliament here that Henry III. was seized with his fatal illness; it was here the clergy refused to contribute to the aid of his successor; and again, it was a Parliament held in Bury which ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, who a few days after the issue of the decree was found dead in his bed, local tradition says, in the Hospital of St. Saviour, of which there are some traces in Northgate Street. The abbey was famous, too, for numbering among its inmates not only that able and entertaining chronicler Jocelyn of Brakelond, but John Lydgate, the travelling monk, learned writer of a *History of the Siege of Troy*, and translator of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes*. It was John Lydgate who, in 1433, presented Henry VI., then only twelve years old, with a MS. copy of his verses. What the young king thought of them we do not know: but the poet Gray had a high opinion of Lydgate's poetic powers, for he wrote, "I pretend not to set him on a level with Chaucer, but he certainly comes the nearest to him of any contemporary writer I am acquainted with. His choice of expression, and the smoothness of his verse, far surpass both Gower and Occleve. He wanted not art in raising the more tender emotions of the mind." Lydgate seems to have had a weakness for presenting copies of his works to notable visitors to St. Edmundsbury, for not only

was Henry VI, the recipient of such a gift, but Warwick the king-maker carried away with him from the town the manuscript of Lydgate's *Pilgrim*.

At the Dissolution the annual revenue of the abbey was set down at £2,366; but that is considered a greatly mistaken estimate, for it has been calculated that the manors which belonged to the abbey are now worth quite half a million a year. The shrine was described by the commissioners as exceedingly large and rich, and very difficult to deface. "We have taken," said they, "in gold and silver 500 marks and above, besides a rich cross with emeralds, and divers stones of great value; and yet we have left the church, abbot, and convent very well furnished with plate of silver." Among the relics found and, presumably, destroyed, were "the coals that St. Lawrence was toasted withal; the parings of St. Edmund's nails; St. Thomas of Canterbury's penknife and his boots; and divers skulls for headache, pieces of the Holy Cross able to make a whole cross, of other reliques for rain, and certain other superstitious usages for avoiding of weeds growing in corn." There were also the shirt, banner, sword, and one of the sinews of St. Edmund, and a "pardon bowl," the drinker from which, "in the worship of God and St. Edmund," won pardon for 500 days' sins. In this connection I may mention a curious practice connected with St. Edmund's shrine. This was the making of the "Oblation of the White Bull." This superstitious rite, believed to have been a relic of East Anglian paganism, was performed by ladies who desired offspring. The white bull, decked with ribbons and floral garlands, was brought to the south gate of the monastery, and led through the streets until the west gate was reached, the interested dame walking by its side, and the monks and townspeople forming an attendant procession. From the west gate the bull was driven back to its pasture, while the dame went on and prayed at the shrine. Foreign ladies could make the oblation by proxy. The tenant of a field known as the

Haberdon held the land on condition that he always kept a white bull in readiness for this strange ceremony.

Under the grand gateway through which kings have passed, and over ground strewn with unrecognisable fragments of monastic buildings, one wanders with phantoms of the past. They come forward out of the lurking shadows of the walls, and each has his tale to tell. That "infinitesimally small Boswell" relates the table-gossip of the monastery and the sage sayings of its most famous abbot; Norman barons, whose gravity testifies to the serious meaning of their presence here, discuss, in subdued voices, matters upon which the fate of England hangs; John Lydgate, leaving the cloisters' shade, steals down to the banks of the Lark, to whose musical murmurings he tries to give metrical expression; a shadowy group, whose marked aloofness arouses suspicion, may even be plotting to murder the uncle of a king. Down by the graceful Abbot's Bridge, near which the Linnet mingles its waters with the Lark, it is easy to imagine contented monks complacently angling with a view to a feast next fast day; for between the two streams were the monastery's fish ponds. On seeing the fragments of the abbey church one quickly conjures up visions of that memorable scene which preceded the signing of Magna Charta; but it also reminds one that there were people in Bury in the eighteenth century who seem to have had as little respect for the tombs of old-time worthies as Norwich had for that of Sir Thomas Browne. For in 1772 some labourers employed in pulling down a portion of this old church discovered a leaden coffin, partially enclosed in an oaken casing, and containing an embalmed body surrounded by "a kind of pickle," and surprisingly well preserved. A surgeon, who must have previously experienced some difficulty in obtaining subjects for anatomical investigation, heard of the discovery and decided that it offered him a good opportunity for carrying out some surgical experiments. By the time these were completed the body was so dissected that the labourers, who wished to sell its leaden

coffin, considered it only worthy of being thrown on a rubbish heap, where they accordingly left it. Subsequent inquiries revealed that the desecrated remains were those of Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, and son of John of Gaunt, who died at East Greenwich in 1427, after expressing a wish to be buried in St. Edmundsbury abbey church, where his duchess had previously been interred. It is only fair to add that when information concerning the surgeon's and labourers' proceedings reached the ears of certain townsmen, care was taken that the mangled remains were collected, placed in an oak coffin, and re-interred.

Carlyle came and mused amidst these "old St. Edmundsbury walls," which were, he said, "not peopled with fantasms, but with men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are. Had thou and I," he declaims, "then been, who knows but we ourselves had taken refuge from an evil time, and fled to dwell here, and meditate on an Eternity, in such fashion as we could? Alas, how like an old osseous fragment, a broken, blackened shinbone of the old dead ages, this black ruin looks out, not yet covered by the soil; still indicating what a once gigantic Life lies buried there! It is dead now, and dumb; but was alive once, and spake. For twenty generations here was the earthly arena where painful living men worked out their life-wrestle—looked at by Earth, by Heaven and Hell. Bells tolled to prayers; and men, of many humours, various thoughts, chanted vespers, matins; and round the little islet of their life rolled for ever (as round ours still rolls, though we are blind and deaf) the illimitable Ocean, tinting all things with its eternal hues and reflexes; making strange prophetic music! How silent now; all departed, clean gone. The World-Dramaturgist has written: *Exeunt.* The devouring Time-Demons have made away with it all." The devouring Time-Demons have left few recognisable fragments of the abbey; but the grand old gateway has escaped their ravening maws. So, too, one might imagine, has the fine tower, or "great gateway of the church of St. Edmund," which

The Norman Tower, Bury St. Edmunds.

Abbot Anselm built nearly eight hundred years ago. But the Norman tower has been restored during the last half century, and the gaps made by the gnawing of the Time-Demons are hardly discernible. But

> "The monks are dead! Nor all their prayers, nor skill,
> Nor wealth, nor wisdom, have availed to save
> The mighty pile which lies here, wrecked and still,
> Yawning to Heaven like an empty grave."

When Defoe visited Bury he wrote of it as a town of which writers had "talked very largely, and perhaps a little too much"; but he agreed that the monks had been wise in selecting such a delightful spot as the site of their monastery. While in the town he was greatly impressed by a "tragical and almost unheard of act of barbarity" which had just been committed here, and which would make "the place less pleasant for some time than it used to be." That tragical act was the attempted murder of a certain Mr. Edward Crisp by his brother-in-law, Mr. Arundel Coke, a barrister-at-law and representative of an ancient and honourable family. Mr. Coke, it appears, after entertaining Mr. Crisp at his house one evening, led him, under pretence of conducting him to the house of a mutual friend, into a narrow, dark lane near the churchyard, where a hired assassin was lying in wait for his victim. This ruffian attacked Mr. Crisp with a hedge-bill, and, after cutting him "as one might say, almost in pieces," left him for dead. Indeed, he was so mangled that it was a wonder there was any life left in him; but he made a marvellous recovery and had the satisfaction of bringing the murderous accomplices to justice, getting them convicted under an old act dealing with defacing and dismembering, and seeing them hanged. The criminals' defence was remarkable for its impudence. They urged that as they intended to murder Crisp, and not maim him, they could not be found guilty under the old act; but Lord Chief Justice King held that if they intended to murder, and only succeeded in maiming, they were rightly indicted.

A trial which aroused even greater interest was held in the town in the year 1828. For more than half a century Norfolk's favourite tragedy has been that which occurred at Stanfield Hall. For quite as long a time the Suffolk rustics revelled in repetitions of the story of Maria Martin and the murder in the Red Barn; and only a few years ago travelling showmen still went from fair to fair in East Anglia and reproduced, at least twice a week, a crude play based upon the tragedy. The crime was a sordid one, and would probably have been forgotten in twelve months had it not been for the suggestion that supernatural agencies were the means of bringing the murderer to justice. Maria Martin, who was twenty-five years old at the time of her death, was the daughter of a mole-catcher living at Polstead, a village not far from Hadleigh. For some time she had continued an imprudent acquaintance with William Corder, the son of a well-to-do farmer—an acquaintance which had brought her serious trouble and was destined to bring her life to a terrible end. On May 18th, 1827, Corder called at her father's house, and promised that if she would meet him at the Red Barn, on his father's farm, he would take her to Ipswich, and there marry her. He also suggested that she should let him previously convey to the barn the clothes she would require for her journey, and that to prevent recognition (his parents strongly objecting to the match) she should go to the barn dressed in male attire and change her clothes there. This she agreed to do, and soon after left her home for the last time. A few days later, her step-mother met Corder and asked him what he had done with her step-daughter. He replied that she was at Ipswich and would remain there a month or six weeks, at the end of which he would marry her. This statement he repeated at intervals until September; and then left Polstead, announcing that he and Maria Martin were going to Yarmouth, where their marriage would shortly take place. Instead of going to Yarmouth, he went to London, where he was eventually arrested.

Now comes the wonderful part of the story, which caused it to have such a fascination for the superstitious not only of Polstead and its neighbourhood but of the whole country. Letters received from Corder representing that he was married to Maria Martin and living with her in London failed to set Mrs. Martin's mind at rest: she could not help thinking that her step-daughter had met with foul play. This idea preyed upon her; she could not get rid of it; and at length she had a vivid dream. She dreamt that Maria was murdered and her body buried under the "right-hand bay of the further side of Corder's Red Barn." Three times this dream came to her, and made so great an impression on her mind that she was not content until she had prevailed upon her husband to search the barn. He did this in company with Pryke, the Corder's bailiff, and was horrified by discovering his daughter's body buried in the very part of the barn his wife had seen so clearly in her dreams. The body was unearthed just eleven months after the girl's disappearance; but no difficulty was experienced in identifying it. A warrant was issued for Corder's arrest; he was apprehended in London, and charged with the murder. At his trial here at Bury he was found guilty and condemned to death. Before his execution he confessed his guilt and admitted the justice of his sentence. An immense concourse of people assembled in the town to witness his execution, and it is said that the rope used was afterwards sold at a guinea an inch to people who had a morbid desire to possess some memento of the murder.

But I was referring to Defoe's visit to this ancient town. After expressing his horror at the brutality of Coke and his accomplice, the versatile author came very near inciting the local gallants to violence over a matter affecting the fair fame of the Bury ladies, or rather those of the neighbourhood around Bury. "I shall believe nothing so scandalous," he wrote, "of the ladies of this town and the country round it as a late writer insinuates. That the ladies round the country

appear mighty gay and agreeable at the time of the fair in this town I acknowledge; one hardly sees such a show in any part of the world; but to suggest that they come hither as to a market is so coarse a jest that the gentlemen who wait on them hither (for they rarely come but in good company) ought to resent and correct him for it. It is true, Bury Fair, like St. Bartholomew Fair, is a fair for diversion more than for trade; and it may be a fair for toys and trinkets, which the ladies may think fit to lay out some of their money in, as they see occasion. But to judge from thence that the knights' daughters of Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and Suffolk—that is to say, for it cannot be understood any otherwise, the daughters of all the gentry of the three counties—come hither to be picked up, is a way of speaking I never before heard any author have the assurance to make use of in print." After reading this, who can say that society in the early part of the eighteenth century was, for the most part, less fastidious in its selection of subjects for public discussion than it is to-day? What the unfortunate arouser of Defoe's ire said was that "an infinite number of knights' and gentlemens' daughters come here to market . . . . and that not in vain, for this fair seldom concludes without some considerable matches or intrigues."

I could stay at least a week in the neighbourhood of Bury, if only to visit some of those fine old manorial halls for which it is remarkable; but as my time is limited I must content myself with a brief reference to one or two of the finest of them, and leave it to more leisured travellers to become closely acquainted with them. Hengrave Hall should certainly be seen, for though its outer court has been removed and the house reduced to a third of its original size, it is a striking example of Tudor architecture. It was built by Sir Thomas Kytson, known to his contemporaries as "Kytson the Merchant," in the early part of the fifteenth century, and its gatehouse, south front, and inner court—more especially the beautiful gatehouse, which is well preserved—testify to the good taste of its

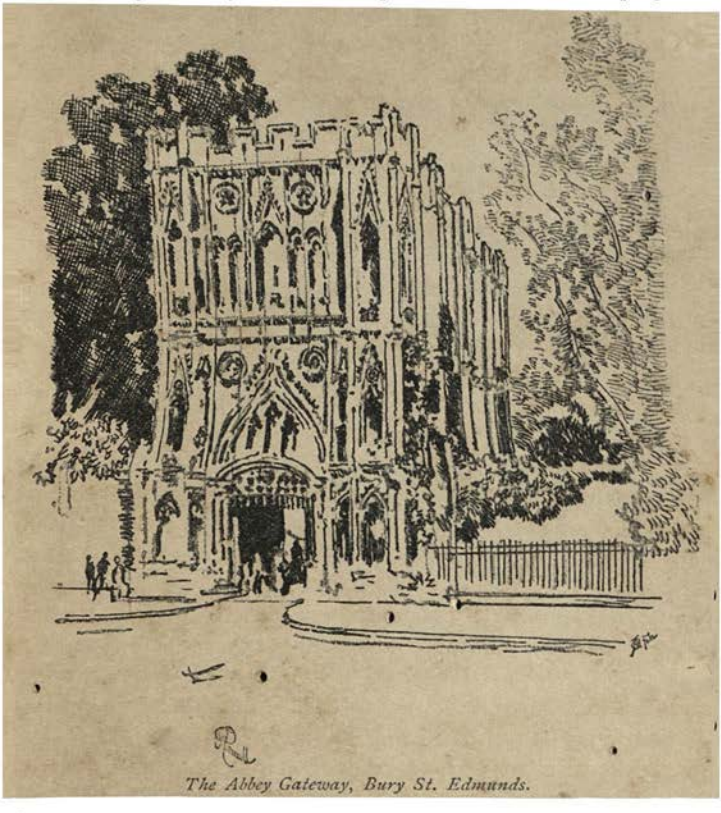
designer and merchant-founder. Rushbrooke Hall is an Elizabethan house surrounded by a wide moat; and the old manor house at West Stow has a towered gatehouse in which are some curious mural paintings dating from the days of the Maiden Queen. They represent the four periods of a man's life. The first depicts a lad hawking, and bears the inscription "Thus doe I all the day;" the second, a young man courting a maiden, inscribed "Thus doe I while I may;" the third, a middle-aged man pointing to the youth and maiden and saying "Thus did I while I might;" and the fourth, a decrepit old man who exclaims "Good Lord! will this world last for ever?" The house to which this imposing entrance belongs was built by Sir John Croftes, a member of the household of Mary Tudor, Queen Dowager of France and Duchess of Suffolk.

About two miles from Bury, near the road to Ixworth, is Barton Hall, the seat of the Bunburys, famous for its fine collection of paintings by old masters. It was at Barton that Oliver Goldsmith was entertained by Mr. Henry Bunbury, his visit to this little Suffolk village being one of the happiest incidents in his checkered life. Here his two loved friends, Mrs. Bunbury ("Little Comedy") and her sister, the "Jessamy Bride," by their affectionate interest in his welfare, made him forget his troubles. Their playful teasings may have done something to effect this, for in Forster's biography we read that "Tricks were played upon his dress, upon his smart black silk coat and expensive pair of ruffles, above all upon his wig, which the valets as well as the guests at Barton appear to have thought a quizzical property: yet all this he suffered with imperturbable good humour. He sung comic songs with great taste and fun; he was inventive in garden buildings and operations, over which he blundered amazingly; and if there was a piece of water in any part of the grounds, he commonly managed to tumble into it . . . . His fondness for flowers was a passion, which he was left to indulge in without restraint, here, at Lord Clare's, at Bennet Langton's, and at Beauclerc's. Thus, when Beau

has to tell Lord Charlemont a couple of years hence, that if he won't come to London the club shall be sent to Ireland to drive him out of that country in self-defence, the terrors of his threat are, that Johnson shall spoil his books, Goldsmith pull his flowers, and (for a quite intolerable climax) Boswell *talk to him!* But most at the card table does Goldsmith seem to have spread contagious mirth: affecting nothing of the rigour of the game (whether it was loo or any other), playing in wild defiance of the chances, laughing at all advice, staking preposterously, and losing always as much as the moderate pool could absorb." Goldsmith's reply, in prose and verse, to an invitation to Barton, in which Mrs. Bunbury suggested he should come wearing his "smart spring velvet coat," bring a wig to wear when he danced with the haymakers, and never fail to follow her and the Jessamy Bride's advice when playing loo, is one of the most delightful letters he ever penned. But it is too lengthy to give in full, so, as quoting would only tantalise the reader, I must leave him to look it up for himself in Forster's *Life*.

From Bury, when, at length, I tear myself away from the Abbey Gate and the peaceful gardens bordering on the Lark, I make my way to Stowmarket, a journey of about twelve miles along one of the pleasantest Suffolk roads I have yet travelled. For some distance it is over-arched by lofty trees—veritable forest trees they would seem if they did not grow in regular rows by the roadsides—and the glimpses I get between them are of spacious fields of waving corn, copses where jackdaws are chattering and jays screaming, and from one of which a sparrow-hawk appears and beats along the hedgerows; banks and field corners white with wild parsleys, and homesteads half hidden among orchards which have lost their wealth of pink and white bloom. Stretches of turf, freshened by recent rain, edge the highway, and are dotted with star-like clusters of thistle leaves just sending up their prickly flower stalks; moss-

leaved yarrow) downy hawkweeds, purple vetches, and large leaved burdocks vary the floral pattern on a groundwork of green. Wild convolvulus trails its pink bell-blossoms over the banks; bright blue eyes of veronica peer from amid the drooping



The Abbey Gateway, Bury St. Edmunds.

brome grasses, patches of sheep's sorrel here and there stain the banks a deep wine-red. The metallic murmur of a mowing machine betokens that "haysel" is still in progress in meadows not far from the road; now and again I pass a waggon heaped

high with fragrant hay. Meadows, fields, and hamlets are steeped in summer sunshine; over them broods the hush of summer noon. Only the swallows darting by me, and the martins rising up to and dipping down from the cottage eaves seem uninfluenced by the noontide heat, and are ceaselessly active. Beighton Green is tenanted only by a team whose driver is probably eating his midday meal in a roadside inn; between Beighton and Woolpit I meet only two pedestrians, a dilapidated tramp carrying a fiddle made of a cigar box, and an urchin whose lagging steps suggest that he would willingly be late for school. Only two pedestrians, I say; but not far out of Beighton, resting on a bank shaded by a high hawthorn hedge, is a little group which I, if invited, would gladly join. It is a group of three persons: two ancient labourers, ruddy-faced and grey-haired, and a clergyman equally ruddy and grey. Evidently the three are cronies, for they are quite at home in each other's company and laughing heartily at something one of them has just said. I imagine the jolly-looking clergyman one of the best type of country parsons, the sort of man who, while not neglecting the obvious and especial duties of his charge, can enjoy a game of bowls on his village bowling-green as heartily as he can enter into the proceedings of a meeting of antiquaries or the opening of a barrow. The pipe he is smoking, and his well-worn tobacco pouch, from which one of the labourers is filling a short-stemmed black clay pipe, prove him to be a broad-minded man, a fact which his wearing a straw hat with a college band round it (probably, for it is a new one, his son's) and the absence of any indication of clericalism in his clothes except a square-cut vest collar, go far to emphasise. Unless I am much mistaken, he knows how to cast a fly, bring down a rocketing pheasant, and handle a man as skilfully as he can rod and gun; and he is just the kind of man who, if there were signs of rain coming, would take off his coat, seize a hayfork, and help to load a waggon with hay or corn. I fancy he has done so more than once,

and that the old farm-hands who are sharing his tobacco and enjoying his jokes worked beside him.

Beighton is a pretty village; but leafy Woolpit is far prettier, and its church, a decorated building with some fine perpendicular additions, is one of the most interesting in Suffolk. Before the dissolution of the monasteries it belonged to St. Edmundsbury Abbey. It then contained an image of "Our Lady of Woolpit," which, with a Holy Well near by, was much resorted to by pilgrims and persons afflicted with failing eyesight. The St. Edmundsbury monks looked upon it and its shrine as one of their most valuable properties, and it was to obtain possession of it from the Pope that the monk Sampson, afterwards the famous abbot, made a journey to Rome. The manor is a very old one, mentioned in Domesday Book as *Wolfpeta*, a name which indicates that in the days when this part of the country was covered with forest there was a wolf pit here. Formerly there were a number of ancient trenches known as the Wolf Pits near the village; and it was in connection with them that a story was told which carries us back to the days when the Suffolk country folk believed in the existence of fairies. The tale, which is told by William of Newburgh, is to this effect. On an autumn day many years ago, some reapers at work in one of the Woolpit fields saw two children, a boy and a girl, come out of the old Wolf Pits. Something strange in their appearance caused the men to leave their work and approach them. It was then seen that the faces, hands, and all the rest of their bodies, not covered by a dress of some unknown material, were of a bright green colour. When work was over for the day the reapers took the children to Woolpit, where the good villagers found a home for them and provided them with food. But for several months they would eat nothing except beans. At length, however, they were persuaded to partake of a more varied diet, with the result that their skins gradually lost their greenness and became as fair as those of the rest of the village children. At first it

was impossible to converse with them, for they knew no word of English; but when they had learnt the language they told a strange story. They were children, they said, of the Land of St. Martin, but where that land was they could not say. It was a Christian land with many churches in it; there was no sun there and the inhabitants lived in a continual twilight; but beyond a broad river which bordered the country was a land of light. Most of their own time there had been spent in tending their father's flocks; and it was while doing this one day that they heard a noise which they compared to the ringing of the St. Edmundsbury bells. What it is they could not say, for as soon as they heard it they became unconscious and knew no more until they found themselves among the reapers in the corn. For some time the children lived happily at Woolpit, and then the boy died; but the girl grew up to womanhood and married a man who lived at Lynn. What became of her afterwards is not recorded. That the children were fairies there can be no doubt, for does not Reginald Scot tell us, in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, that "the fairies do principally inhabit the mountains and caverns of the earth whose nature is to make strange apparitions on the earth, in meadows or in mountains, being like men and women, soldiers, kings, and ladies, children, and horsemen clothed in green." Unfortunately William of Newburgh neglects to give the date of their appearance at Woolpit.

The Woolpit fairies are not the only ones which have been met with about here. In the middle of the eighteenth century fairies frequented some houses in Tavern Street, Stowmarket. They were never seen in the daytime; but people who kept watch for them at night often saw them. They were very tiny people and behaved in an exceedingly frolicsome fashion: often a large company of them would sing and dance together; but they vanished as soon as they discovered any one observing them, and then "sparks of fire as bright as stars used to appear under the feet of the persons who disturbed them."

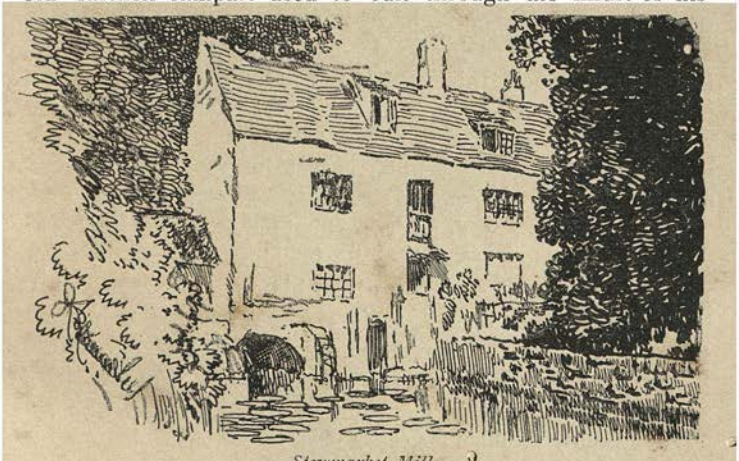
Even so recently as the early part of the nineteeth century the "good people" haunted the meadows bordering the Bury road, and a statement made by a man who saw them there is printed in Hollingsworth's *History of Stowmarket.* The man was going home one bright moonlight night when he saw them. "There might be a dozen of them," he said, "the biggest about three feet high, the small ones like dolls. Their dresses sparkled as if with spangles like the girls at shows at Stow Fair; they were moving round hand in hand in a ring; no noise (came) from them. They seemed light and shadowy (!), not like solid bodies. I passed on, saying The Lord have mercy on me, but them must be the fairies, and being alone there on the path over the field could see them as plain as I do you. I looked after them when I got over the stile, and they were there just the same, moving round and round. . . . I might be forty yards from them, and I did not like to stop and stare at them. *I was quite sober at the time.*" Mr. Hollingsworth was greatly interested in local fairy tales, and made a note of all he heard. Several besides the two just quoted, are reproduced in his *History.* They all deal with comparatively recent appearances of the "good people" so go far to confute Chaucer's assertion that

> "Now can no man see non elves mo;
> For now the grete charitee and prayeres
> Of limetours and other holy freres
> That searchen every land and every streme
> As thikke as motes in the sonne beme,
> Blessing halles, chambers, kichenes and bowres,
> Cities and burghes, shepines and dairies,
> This maketh that there ben no fairies;
> For thir as wont to walken was an elf,
> Thir walketh now the limetour himself."

At Haughley, says a new guide book I picked up at Bury, are "some very extensive ruins of an old and strongly fortified castle," so I am tempted to leave for a while the main road to

Stowmarket in order to get a glimpse of this imposing fortress. As I draw near the village I picture to myself one of those grey old ivy-clad strongholds such as I have seen at Caister, Castle Acre, and elsewhere; it even occurs to me that here, in this out-of-the-way Suffolk hamlet, there may be a ruin as grand as that of Framlingham. But on seeing the real castle, or the site where there may once have been a castle, all such fond imaginings are dispelled. What I see is simply another of those huge mounds so plentiful in East Anglia and already so familiar to me; only in this case its outlines, and those of its flanking earthworks, are totally hidden by trees and their dense undergrowth. Of the "extensive ruins of an old and strongly fortified castle" I see no signs, though an old villager tells me that in winter traces of foundations are visible among the leafless thorn and bramble thickets. That there was once a fortified house of some kind here is undeniable, for even now the mound and earthworks are surrounded by a moat so deep that within the memory of men still living at Haughley a miller's horse dragged a cart into it until both horse and cart were out of sight. But this stronghold is, so far as I can see, wholly vanished, and on inquiring into its history I am reminded that it was the place which was stormed and destroyed by that Robert de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester, who was slain in that Battle of Fornham I referred to earlier in this chapter. It was then held by Ralph de Broc, its builder, who chose Haughley for the site of his "castle"—a "tall round tower," one historian calls it—because of the advantages offered by its great artificial mound. This mound, the origin of which I will not venture to suggest, would, if it were not so densely clothed with trees and nut bushes, command a wide view; if you climb to the higher branches of one of the taller trees you may even see the tower of Ely Cathedral, which is thirty miles away. Like the rest of these artificial hillocks it seems to have been occupied by Romans, Saxons, and Normans in turn; but as to whether, as some have

said, it was really that *Sitomagus* which was the central camp of Suetonius, the Roman general who commanded the district, I have no opinion to offer. Having already seen so many "ancient British earthworks," I am disposed to enjoy the quiet charms of Haughley village and visit the local hop gardens—a rare sight in East Anglia—rather than indulge in futile guesswork. So, refusing to be beguiled by the old villager into entering his garden in order to see where an old earthen rampart used to run through the midst of his



Stowmarket Mill.

cabbage beds—it is levelled now—I abandoned myself for a while to Arcadian delights, and then set out for Stowmarket.

As I am not particularly interested in the manufacture of gun-cotton or cordite, there are, apart from two or three curious monuments in the church, only two things I care to look at in Stowmarket. These are the Old Vicarage, which in the sixteenth century was the home of Milton's tutor, Dr. Young; and a weather-beaten old mulberry tree in the Old Vicarage garden, said to have been planted by the poet during one of his visits to the town. The house which hides itself away behind

the newer houses of one of the main streets, retains some external evidence of its antiquity; and its interior, though considerably altered in its arrangement, possesses many features characteristic of the age in which it was built. The walls of its older portions are constructed of clay with oak framing; while the oak floor joists are, in all probability, the ribs of old ships or parts of an old church roof. As to Dr. Thomas Young, who was appointed vicar of the town in 1628, he is described by one of his nineteenth century successors as a man of profound learning and, like his famous pupil, a republican in politics and a Calvinistic dogmatist in theology. Milton, in a Latin ode, acknowledges his indebtedness to him for the influence he exerted upon his youthful mind. After his removal to Stowmarket, the poet still kept closely in touch with him, and it is not unlikely that he was an occasional guest at the Old Vicarage.

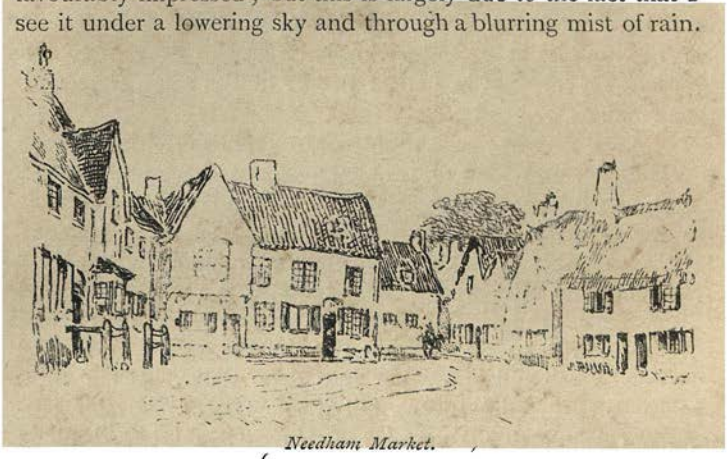
It was during Dr. Young's pastorate that Stowmarket was visited by Matthew Hopkins, the infamous witch-finder; but with what results he carried on here his abominable investigations history sayeth not. This tyrannous charlatan was an Essex man whom Parliament commissioned to travel about the Eastern counties for the purpose of discovering and punishing witches. "Witch-finder General," he called himself, and was allowed twenty shillings for every town he visited. Among his victims was a clergyman named Lowes, a vicar of Brandeston, a village not far from Framlingham. Apparently this Lowes was an eccentric old man, yet absolutely inoffensive; but some of his parishioners had a grudge against him, and, as a consequence, he was arraigned at Bury before certain commissioners (including the Rev. Mr. Calamy, that notable Puritan whose political feelings so often ran away with him) and condemned to death. He was executed, with other reputed wizards and witches, at Bury, and as no one would undertake to give him Christian burial he was allowed to read his own burial service. A curious letter is preserved in which a gentleman whose father was one

of Lowes' parishioners gives his opinion concerning the doing to death of this harmless divine. "My father," he says, "was always of the opinion that Mr. Lowes suffered wrongfully, and hath often said that he did not believe he was no more a wizard than he was. I have heard it from those that watched with him that they kept him awake several nights together, and run him backwards and forwards about the room, until he was out of breath; then they rested him a little, and then ran him again. And this they did for several nights together, till he was weary of his life, and was scarce sensible of what he said or did. They swum him at Framlingham, but that was no rule to try him by; for they put in honest people at the same time and they swam as well as he."

Hopkins, who was paid twenty-eight pounds for his services in ridding Stowmarket of people equally as dangerous to the community as the unfortunate Lowes, explained that the walking up and down process was practised upon suspected persons "because if they be suffered to couch, immediately came their familiars into the room, and scareth the watchers, and hearteneth on the witch." One of his tests, which was applied to Lowes, was to tie together the thumbs and toes of the supposed witch and throw her into deep water. If she sank she was considered innocent, but if she floated she was pronounced guilty. To the genius who invented this test Hopkins owed his final and deserved discomfiture, for it was applied to him by a party of rollicking country blades who had grown tired of his nefarious practices. Encountering him one day they tied *his* thumbs and toes together and threw him into a river; and as he struggled and floated he was at once pronounced to be a wizard. Thus made the laughing-stock of all sensible men, he was compelled to throw up his commission and leave the Eastern counties. It seems strange that so learned a man as Dr. Young should have been deceived by such a charlatan; but wherever Hopkins went he met with a cordial welcome from the Puritan divines. During sixteen

years 109 persons were condemned for witchcraft, sixty of whom were hanged in Suffolk alone. According to a writer of the time there were at least thirteen kinds of witches, the Hebrew, Indian, Lapland, Protestant, Popish, Pagan, Cursing, Blessing, Active, and Passive witches, and witches by Art, Compact, or Descent.

With the country between Stowmarket and Ipswich I am not favourably impressed; but this is largely due to the fact that I see it under a lowering sky and through a blurring mist of rain.



Needham Market.

Needham Market, under more cheerful circumstances, may be worthy of exploration—an inn I get a glimpse of as I hasten through the village street certainly has an inviting appearance, though this may be owing to the dismalness outside—but for the most part the road seems monotonous and uninteresting. Leafy June seems suddenly to have taken upon itself the aspect of dreary October; and as there are indications that the rain-storm which has begun is no mere summer shower to "last but half an hour" I am glad when I reach Ipswich and take my ease at an inn.

The Bell Cage, East Bergholt Churchyard.

CHAPTER XIV

ALDBOROUGH, ORFORD, AND CONSTABLE'S COUNTRY

HAVING found my way back to Ipswich, after attempting to include in what may be considered a continuous tour the chief places of interest and some of the most picturesque scenery in East Anglia, I am only too conscious that, much as I have seen, I have left unseen and unnoted a great many places which have no small claim on my attention. Glancing over the map on which my journeyings are indicated I am dismayed at observing what wide stretches of country I have left wholly unvisited, how many towns I have not entered, how many districts I have left unexplored. Many as are the miles I have travelled, they are as a day's journey compared to a lifetime's wanderings when considered in relation to the thousands of miles I might have covered and still have been within the bounds of East Anglia. Yet it is not without satisfaction that, so far as Norfolk and Suffolk are concerned, I note how few are the really important historically and otherwise interesting places I have neglected. True, when at Bury I might have returned to Ipswich by way

of Lavenham and Hadleigh, and now that I have arrived at the Suffolk capital by a rather uninteresting route I wish I had done so; but with the prospect, which is before me to-day, of enjoying the delights of that district which artists call Constable's Country, I may well be forgiven for caring little by what road I came here. Yet if I had not already travelled so far, I might even now be disposed to add fifty miles or so to my cyclometer's record and spend a day or two in exploring that portion of south-eastern Suffolk which lies between Ipswich, Woodbridge, and Framlingham and the sea. And this because within its comparatively limited area is contained some lovely river valley scenery and quaint and attractive coast towns and villages. To pass on to Constable's Country without making some reference to the other charmful—if I may coin the word —district would be unpardonable, so although my thoughts are continually wandering towards those scenes amid which one of England's most gifted landscape painters found the subjects of his finest work I will keep a curb on them while I try to convey some idea of what other travellers may enjoy if they are willing to extend their acquaintance with this part of East Anglia.

A day may well be spent in exploring that deltaic tract of country lying between the estuaries of the Orwell and Stour; but as, during the summer months, passenger steamers ply frequently between Ipswich and Harwich by way of the Orwell, visitors are generally content with the view they get of it from the river. The estuarine Orwell, though somewhat repellent at low tide, flows through a pleasant country chiefly made up of parks and woodlands. With it are closely associated the names of two famous admirals, Vernon and Sir Philip Broke, whose homes were on adjoining estates bordering the river. Both were gallant seamen whose deeds have become part of English history. Vernon, who lived at Orwell Park, and whom Horace Walpole called "a silly, noisy admiral, so popular that he was chosen into Parliament for several places, had his head painted on every sign, and his birthday kept twice in one year," was the

victor at Porto Bello ; Broke, whose ancestral home was Broke Hall, was in command of the *Shannon* when she fought her memorable duel with the *Chesapeake*. At Grimston Hall, now a farmhouse, not far from the mouth of the river, Thomas Candish or Cavendish, who was the second Englishman to circumnavigate the globe, came to reside when he returned from his long and perilous voyage. From Plymouth this gallant Elizabethan seaman sent a letter to Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chancellor, in which he desired that his lordship should "make knowen unto Her Majesty the desire" he "had to doe Her Majesty service in the performance" of his adventurous cruise. "It has pleased God," he said, "to give her the victory over part of her enemies, so I trust yer long to see her overthrow them all. For the places of their wealth, whereby they have maintained and made their warres, are now perfectly discovered, and, if it please Her Majesty, with a very small power she may take the spoile of them all. It hath pleased the Almighty to suffer me to circompasse the whole globe of the world, entering in at the Streight of Magellan and returning by the Cape de Buena Esperanza. In which voyage I have either discovered or brought certaine intelligence of all the rich places of the world that were ever knowen or discovered by any Christian. I navigated alongst the coast of Chili, Peru, and Neuva Espane, where I made greate spoils: I burnt and sunk nineteen sailes of ships, small and greate. All the villages and townes that ever I landed at I burnt and spoiled ; and had I not bene discovered upon the coast I had taken greate quantitie of treasure. The matter of most profit unto me was a greate ship of the king's, which I took at California ; which ship came from the Philippines, being one of the richest of merchandize that ever passed those seas, as the king's register and merchants' accounts did shew. Which goods (for that my ships were not able to contain the least part of them) I was inforced to set on fire. From the Cape of California, being the uttermost part of all Neuva Espane, I navigated to the

islands of the Philippines, hard upon the coast of China, of which country I have brought such intelligence as hath not bene heard of in these parts. The statelinesse and riches of which country I fear to make report of least I should not be credited; for if I had not knowen sufficiently the incomparable wealth of that country, I should have bene as incredulous thereof as others will be that have not had the like experience. I sailed along the islands of the Malucos, where among some of the heathen people I was well intreated; where our countrymen may have trade as freely as the Portugals, if they will themselves. From thence I passed by the Cape of Buena Esperanza, and found out by the way homeward the island of St. Helena, where the Portugals used to relieve themselves; and from that island God hath suffered me to return to England. All which services, with myself, I humbly prostrate at Her Majesty's feet, desiring the Almighty long to continue her reigne among us; for at this day she is the most famous and victorious prince that liveth in the world." After such an adventurous voyage the daring sailor might well have been content with the laurels he had gained and have spent the rest of his life in peace in his Suffolk home, where the roaring of the sea would have reminded him of past perils and victories. But the restless spirit of the age which knew Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, and Raleigh moved him to make a second attempt to circumnavigate the globe, this time taking with him five ships. He sailed from Plymouth in August, 1591. All went well until the Straits of Magellan were reached; but there his ship was lost sight of by her consorts and never seen again.

When Gainsborough resided in Ipswich much of his time was spent on the banks of the Orwell, and a lane not far from the town, now known as Gainsborough's Lane, is depicted in his picture *The Market Cart*, which is in the National Gallery. This lane owes its beauty to its magnificent oaks, which interlace their branches above the turf-bordered footpath leading to the Priory Farmhouse in which Margaret

Catchpole was employed as a domestic servant. This house was formerly an Augustinian monastery.

The little port of Aldborough, which is not easily accessible from Ipswich, is chiefly remarkable for being the birthplace of the poet Crabbe, whose father was a local exciseman. The town, like Dunwich, has suffered considerably from encroachments of the sea, which during the last three hundred years have robbed it not only of houses but of whole streets. In fact the original town has practically vanished, and the only striking trace of it is its old Moot Hall, a quaint building apparently dating from the latter part of the sixteenth century. Aldborough claims to have some attractions for tourists, but these attractions are not much in evidence. Crabbe, who, like Bloomfield, in his youth suffered severely from bodily weakness, did not love his native place, and its depressing influence kept his thoughts in a melancholy groove. The dismalness of the surroundings of his boyhood's home is indicated in his lines—

"Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the blighted rye;
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infant threaten war.
There poppies, nodding, mock the hope of toil,
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high above the slender sheat,
The slimy mallow waves her silken leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade."

Nor was Crabbe favourably impressed by the inhabitants of this desolate district, for he adds:

"Here, wandering long amid these frowning fields,
I sought the simple life that Nature yields;
Rapine, and wrong, and fear usurped her place,
And a wild, artful, surly, savage race,

Who, only skilled to take the finny tribe,
The yearly dinner, or septennial bribe,
Wait on the shore, and as the waves run high,
On the tossed vessel bend their eager eye,
Which to their coast directs its venturous way,
Theirs or the ocean's miserable prey."

The poet here suggests that the Aldborough beach folk, if not wreckers, were more disposed to let ships run ashore than to try and aid them; but I doubt whether in that respect they were worse than those of the other towns and hamlets along the coast. Among such a crew, however, a lad of Crabbe's disposition could hardly have been happy, in fact he grew morose and melancholy. Still, although remarkable for his gentleness, he was a stranger to fear. In proof of this a story is told. In the days when fortune began to smile on him he obtained possession of some property at Parham. There it came to his knowledge that his bailiff was in league with a gang of smugglers. On being charged with the fact, and told that his conduct was roguish, the man became enraged, grasped a knife, and exclaimed, "No man shall call me a rogue!" Unmoved by his anger and threatening attitude, Crabbe quietly remarked, "Now, Robert, you are too much for me; put down that knife and then we can talk on equal terms." As the bailiff hesitated, Crabbe added loudly: "Get out of the house, you scoundrel!" And the man promptly got out.

What sort of reputation the Aldborough beachman possessed in Crabbe's day does not much matter now; but their living descendants are well known to be as brave as any of the sea warriors of the East Anglian coast. And brave they need be to man the lifeboat which puts to sea from Aldborough beach whenever a ship in distress is sighted; for the sandbanks off the coast have a bad name among seamen, and to launch a boat from the beach in stormy weather is hard and dangerous work. But the men are never faint-hearted, and their record is a

splendid one. Some of them have sacrificed their lives in the cause of humanity. When last I saw Aldborough the town was lamenting the loss of eight of its bravest sons, who had been drowned through the capsizing of a lifeboat.

Apart from its connection with Crabbe's early life the town, from a tourist's point of view, has little interest; but there is a curious old tract in the British Museum which relates to it. It is entitled "A Signe from Heaven, or a Fearful and Terrible Noise heard in the Ayre at Aldborow in the County of Suffolke, on Thursday, the 4th day of August, at 5 of the clocke in the afternoone—wherein was heard the beating of Drums, the discharging of Muskets and great Ordnance, for the space of an houre or more, as will be attested by many men of good worth, and exhibited to some chief Members of the Honourable House of Commons: with a stone that fell from the sky in that storme or noise farther, which is here to be seen in Towne, being of a great weight." This tract, printed in London in 1642, eight days after the occurrence of the "terrible signe," seems to indicate that thunderstorms were not very prevalent on the East Coast during the seventeenth century. How a thunderstorm could subsequently be "exhibited to some chief members of the Honourable House of Commons" is a bit of a puzzle even to us who live in an age of meteorological marvels.

A few miles south of Aldborough, from which it is often more easily reached by water than by land, is Orford, an ancient decayed town, possessing an early Norman castle of unknown origin. Apparently this castle was built for purposes of coast defence; but nothing is known of its history previous to the reign of Henry I. when the manor of Orford was granted to a certain Peter de Valoines. All that is left of this seaboard stronghold is its massive keep, surmounting a lofty mound surrounded by deep ditches and ruined ramparts which supplied ballast to many a "light" coaster in the days when the town had a harbour of its own. The legend of the "Wild

Man of Orford" still lingers in the neighbourhood. That "wild man" was a wonderful sea monster which, according to Ralph, a thirteenth century abbot of Coggeshall, was caught one day in the Orford fishermen's nets. In size and shape it resembled a man; the crown of its head was hairless; but it had a long ragged beard. It was given to the governor of the castle, whose servants, though they fed it on fish and flesh, which it would eat either raw or cooked, tormented it cruelly in trying to make it speak. However, unlike many of the "monsters dire" which

> "Crawl, and wriggle, and foam with rage
> Through dark tradition and ballad age,"

it was a very patient creature and did not resent ill treatment. When the fishermen one day took it out to sea and, having first spread their nets to prevent its escape, allowed it to enter the water, it had no difficulty in diving under the nets, beyond which it appeared, and by its grimaces seemed to deride its captors; but it made no effort to escape, followed the fishermen back to shore, and submitted to be re-imprisoned in the castle. There it remained for some time; but eventually becoming weary, it is said, of living without the companionship of other creatures of its kind it eluded its gaolers, vanished into the sea, and was heard of no more.

Monastic remains of any importance are not to be found in south-eastern Suffolk; but about five miles from Orford are the scanty ruins of Butley Priory, founded by Ranulph de Glanville in 1171. The gateway of this priory, which has been converted into a farm house, is surmounted by five rows of shields of arms, including those of several famous East Anglian nobles. Curiously enough, very few of those nobles are known to have been benefactors of the priory.

On a breezy morning early in August I start on the last day's journey of this tour through East Anglia. I leave Ipswich by the London road, which before I turn into the

by-road to East Bergholt and Manningtree, takes me through Copdock, Washbrook, and Bentley. Harvest, already nearly over in Essex, has in Suffolk only just begun, and no sooner am I out of Ipswich than I am in the midst of half-reaped fields of yellow corn. The sky is full of flying clouds whose shadows sweep in quick succession over the waving corn; on either side of the road the hedges are draped and weighed down by dense masses of traveller's joy, just now in fullest flower. Autumn has come to the hedge banks while the copses and the trees on the field borders are still wearing their summer green: only dingy purple horehound, wide-branching hedge mustard, gold-tipped tansy, and a few bright yellow hawkweeds are blooming where a little while ago there was a wealth of pink and white wild roses. But in some of the pastures, where recent rains have almost produced a second hay crop, there is a glorious blaze of colour, the ragwort being all aflame there, and almost as beautiful as mid-April gorse. I miss the outbursts of bird-music which cheered my earlier journeyings; but now and again a feeble *trill* tells me that the warblers have not yet started on their southward flight; and the house martins are still busy around the cottage eaves. On the hazels the green-sheathed nut clusters have formed, and small acorns are to be seen on the pollard oaks. Here and there the blackberries are reddening; but most of them are as yet green. On a high bank near Copdock school-house white campions are still in bloom; there, too, the air is filled with the mingled fragrance of tansy and peppermint, two strong scents which remind me of old-fashioned country gardens.

An intermittent rattle of reaping-machines is heard instead of birds' songs. A week or two ago, when day after day the clouds discharged torrents of rain upon the cornfields, the Suffolk farmers pulled long faces; the crops, they said, would be beaten down; the reaping-machines would be useless; all the corn would have to be cut, at considerable extra expense, with the scythes. But apparently their dismal forecasts were the

offspring of the hours of gloom, destined to die and be forgotten in the sunlight; for the red-painted, loud-rattling reapers are merrily at work in the fields. Their metallic murmuring reminds me of another harvest scene I witnessed in Suffolk several years ago, when I was a temporary inmate of an ancient farmhouse far away from railways and main roads. Day after day I had listened to the rattle of the reapers until it almost seemed to me the natural voice of the sun-ripened cornfields. One day I wandered into a field where the standing corn con-

East Bergholt.

sisted of a gradually lessening square, along the borders of which a reaping machine moved in a manner which somehow suggested one of the scythe-armed chariots of the Iceni. Around this square the harvestmen, clutching stout sticks, stood like sentries on point duty; and presently I learnt that they were watching for rabbits, many of which had sought shelter in the shrinking square. From time to time one of the rabbits would break from its scanty covert, and then there would be a wild chase until it was run down and knocked on the head, or escaped beyond the borders of the field. When only a few square yards of

corn remained uncut three rabbits made a simultaneous dash for freedom, and then even the man who was driving the reaper leapt from his seat and joined in the chase. By the time the reaping of the corn was completed half a dozen brace of rabbits were lying on a bank in a corner of the field. Later in the day they were sold "by auction," a cheery old rustic who had, as his mates remarked, "plenty to say for hisself," acting as salesman. Taking up a rabbit by the ears, and holding it towards his companions, who were seated on the bank, he held forth something in this style :

"Now then, you chaps, how much for thissun? Billy Hanslip ha' dinged one o' its eyes in, but it's better now an' if a stowt had got it. Billy allus had a way o' overdoin' things; thas how he come to luse his fingers in th' chaff-cutter; worn't it, Billy? Twopence—threepence for thissun. Thas a tidy bit cheaper'n snarin' em an' gitten fined ten bob for trapesin in sarch o' conies, ain't it, Tom? You oughter know. You can shew thissun to th' policeman an' laugh at 'im, knowin' its honest come by. Fowerpence, Jim, goin' at fowerpence; it's yars, bor. Now for this here owd buck. He'd make a fine meal for yar baker's dozen, Tom, bor, and yow could ax me to dinner a-Sunday. He's near as big as a hare, an' arter yar missis ha' had a hand at 'un yow ont know th' differs. He's a beauty, he is; an' his lugs ain't far off being as long as yars wor when yow heered th' keeper tell his wife he wor a-goin to Beccles market. Hull us yar frail crome here, Billy; I want suffin to knock 'em down with; rabbits git tew tender for th' money if you knock em' down on a gatepost. Come now, Reub; yow hain't spent all th' change outer that shillun what th' maaster give yow for th' string o' fish what yar boy Ben browt from Yarmouth. They ony had threepence on it at the 'Horse-Shoes,' 'cause you towd 'em as how none but yarself wor dry. No, thank ye, not jist now; but I'll see ye at th' 'Horse-Shoes' to-night. Here's that litsle 'un what Futs fell on agin th' plantin fence, and what shruck like a pywipe

(peewit) when he killed 'un. Futs ha' flattened 'un out summut, but there's some meat in it yet. Tain't so bad as th' one what Steve Runnacles dragged th' roll over in th' Home Field. Steve said as how ter didn't matter, an' ud ony make it more tenderer. He allers had half a tile off, had Steve; but he could bid a sight smarter'n some o' yow chaps, even sich on yer as make extry shulluns outer boys' fish. Fare to me some on yer must ha' gone off yer feed, or else yer afraid yow ont git much largesse ter year. My arms are beginnin' ter ache good tidily, a-howdin' up rabbits what nobody

East Bergholt.

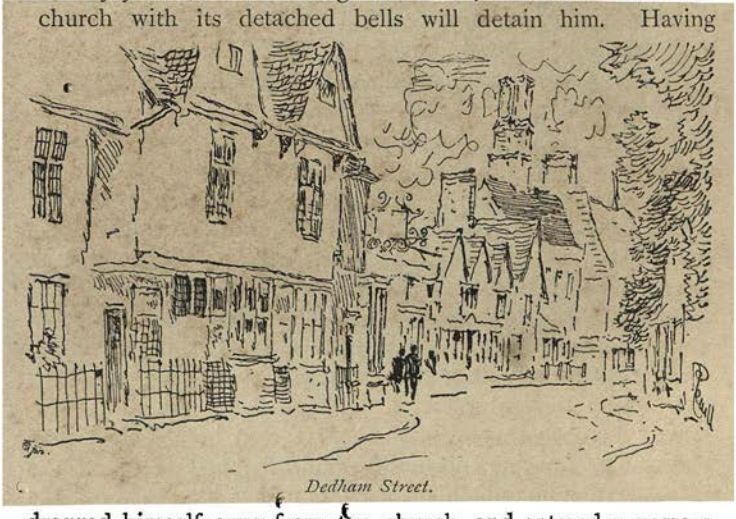
ont buy. There tree left now. Billy, bor; yow'd better lave 'em at th' shop as yow go tru th' village; maybe Withers can make suffin on 'em, an' we can square up to-morrow. Tell you what, you chaps, sellin' rabbits is a sight drier work an' troshin, though them mayn't believe it what sit nigh th' bottle. Hand un here, Tom, bor, afore there's more wind and wet in it." And that is how the rabbits were disposed of.

This strange sale, however, took place in north-east Suffolk, and here I am on the verge of Constable's Country. The district through which I approach it is pleasant enough, but in

no way remarkable for its scenery: it is just what you may find bordering a hundred highways and byways in East Anglia. But a little way beyond Bentley White Horse, a quaint old inn which looks as if it intended to get customers by spreading itself half way across the high road, there is a by-road on the left which soon brings me into the midst of one of the most charming villages and delightful districts in England. East Bergholt, like Walberswick, is an artists' village; but unlike Walberswick it has produced a great artist. It seems to have been built to be painted; otherwise its rustic architects would never have designed such picturesque cottages and incomparably delightful creeper-clad houses. For the East Bergholt cottages are unlike most of the Suffolk cottages; they are either roofed with the small red tiles of the eighteenth century, and are overgrown with moss until they are as rich in hue as ancient tree-trunks; or they are overlaid with thatch which nearly reaches the ground, and which curves projectingly over the small-paned windows so that they appear to be surmounted by prominent arching eyebrows. Indeed, half the cottages in the village are so strikingly picturesque that it is difficult to believe that to look so is not the sole object of their existence: nestling in fragrant flower gardens, and with woodbine-garlanded porches, they suggest those picture-book cottages so pleasant to imagine and hard to find. In many respects the place is unique, notably in its church which, charmingly embowered among beautiful trees, not only boasts of having lost its tower through the machinations of the evil one, but has its bells hung in a kind of wooden cage in the churchyard. I have not a chance of hearing the bells rung; but as I pass through the village the air is musical with the chiming of a sweet-toned peal from a convent overlooking the Dedham vale.

"I associate my careless boyhood with all that lies on the banks of the Stour: those scenes made me a painter, and I am grateful." So wrote Constable, whose father's water-mill was turned by the waters of that peaceful stream. Presently I shall

see the mill itself—I have heard that if it were not for an ugly modern chimney shaft it would be an even more charming subject for artists now than it was in Constable's time—but I defy any one, anxious as he may be to arrive at Flatford Mill, to get there quickly if he has never been in its neighbourhood before. First, East Bergholt village will make him forget for a while the chief purpose of his pilgrimage, and he will frequently pause to enjoy its Arcadian delights. Then, the fine old towerless church with its detached bells will detain him. Having



Dedham Street.

dragged himself away from the church, and entered a narrow by-road near it, he will perhaps imagine that nothing is now likely to hinder his progress towards the mill; but hardly will the thought have come to him than he will be compelled to halt again. For a little way along that shady by-road the loveliest landscape in East Anglia reveals itself. Until I had seen it I imagined there were scenes in Broadland and along the coast road to Wells which might rival each other in claiming that distinction; but having seen the Vale of Dedham I feel confident that their rivalry can only be for a second place in

scenic merit. I cannot wonder that Constable spent days and weeks together on the upland heights overlooking this lovely vale. From his earliest days he was familiar with it, but never tired of seeing and painting it, and the more he did so the more beautiful it seemed to him. It has been said that his artistic range was limited, and that he was most successful in depicting the scenery of his native district. The man who could faithfully depict the beauties of the Vale of Dedham had little cause to regret that his range was limited or to long for a wider one.

Words cannot convey the charm of this lovely vale. Its beauty is too subtle to be grasped in detail, too various to be described in general terms. Just now, as I lean against a field gate beside the Flatford road, it is full of lights and shades and overhung by slowly drifting clouds. Where the shadows lurk the outlines of the trees and homesteads are hardly definable; even the borders of the fields and pastures are scarcely perceptible; but where the sunlight falls every waterside willow and poplar, every cottage, hedgerow, and farmstead stands out clear and beautiful, each a picture in itself. Subject to the clouds' drift, the swathes of light and shade steal in quick succession through the vale, and presently the tall square tower of Dedham church—so conspicuous a feature of Constable's picture of the vale—reveals itself amid a grove of trees. Around the church lies the village which gives its name to the vale, and beyond it and the slow-flowing river are the Essex cornfields. Go into the National Gallery and look at Constable's "Cornfield" and you will see one of these Essex fields. In the foreground of the picture is a winding lane, beyond which the yellow corn is bathed in sunlight. Through an open gateway you see the corn-stalks bowing before the wind. Beyond the field is Dedham church, which the artist could seldom keep out of his pictures of his homeland. Beside the lane is a brook into which the brambles dip their bending briars, arching from banks where wave the white umbels of

wild parsleys. Along the rough waggon track a dog drives a flock of sheep while their young shepherd lies down to drink of the waters of the brook. In the neighbourhood of East Bergholt are many such lanes, bordered by oaks and elms, and hedgerows draped with bryony. They tempt you to leave the highroads and by-roads; but if you yield to the temptation you find it hard to retrace your steps, for every turning reveals some fresh alluring charm. One such lane branches off from the Flatford road and seems to lose itself in the Dedham Vale;

Flatford Mill, East Bergholt.

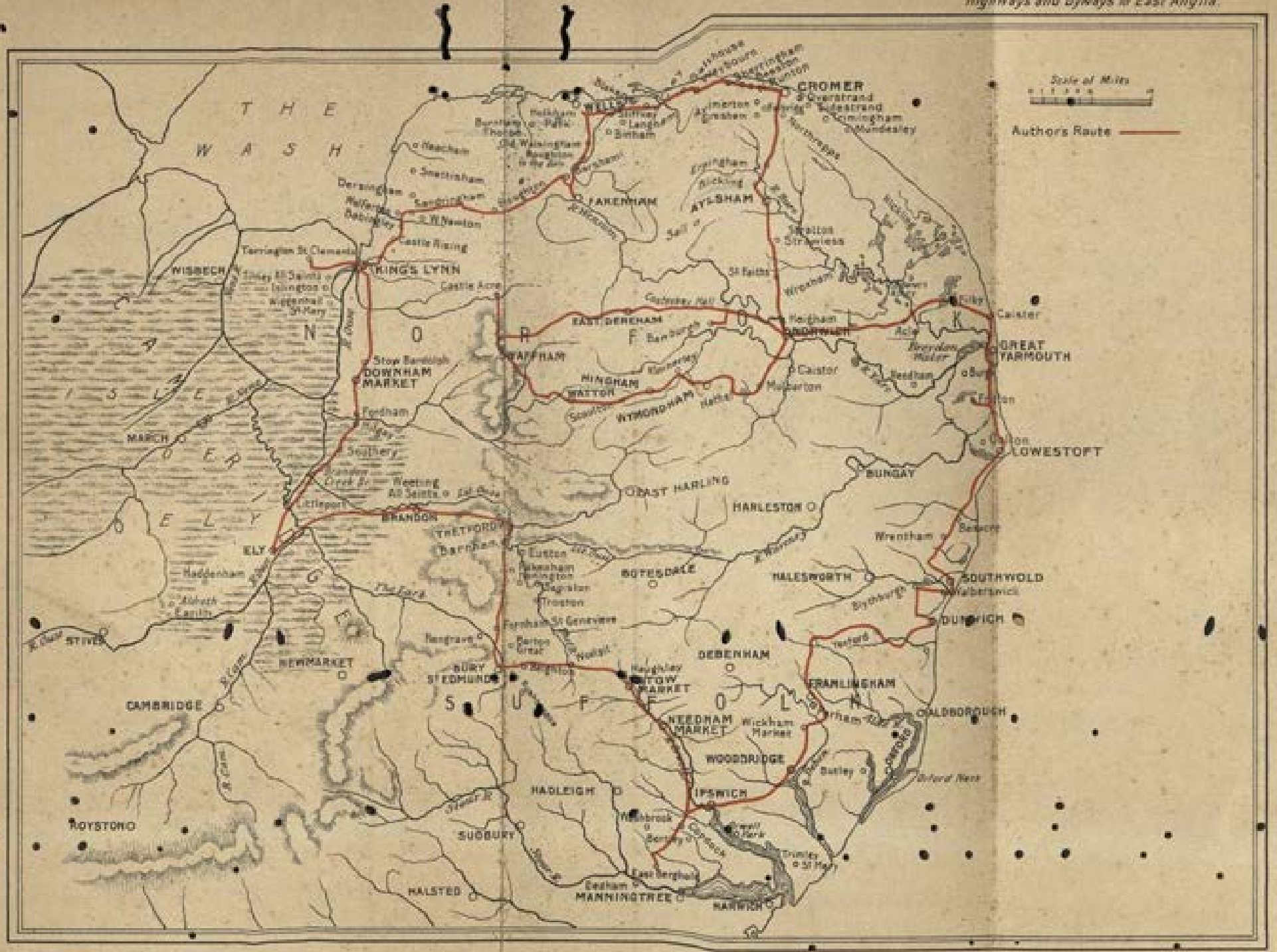
but the road leads down to the river. And it is towards the river I ramble after leaning for an hour or more over that field gate on the uplands above the vale. But like most strangers in this enchanting country I find it impossible to hasten. For the road suddenly becomes an arboreal cloister into which the sunlight filters as through the leafage of a dense wood, and again I am a laggard wayfarer, loitering as though I had a lifetime in which to find my way to Flatford Mill. A noontide twilight lurks in this tunnel of sylvan greenery; moths which shun the daylight are abroad here at midday; even in winter, when the trees are leafless, this bit of road can

never know full daylight, so closely interlaced are its over-arching boughs. I begin to think that Nature never meant men to discover Flatford, so made the approach to it one of captivating charm.

But I have determined that no witchery of Nature shall keep me from seeing Flatford Mill, and when I emerge from the mystic noon-gloom of this sylvan shadow-land I have freed myself of the last of her magic spells. Before me lie the open levels of the Stour valley—a wide plain of pleasant pasture-lands where cattle are grazing amid whispering sedges and gleaming willows. As I cross the rustic wooden bridge which spans the river a little way below the mill I hear the rushing of water over a weir, and following the footpath by the riverside I soon come to the lock gates. A few steps further and the mill itself comes in sight on the opposite bank of the stream. It has altered little since Constable painted it nearly a hundred years ago; but the trees which then gave it a sylvan setting almost hide it now, and to see it clearly I have to cross the river again. But the old wooden lock is quite unchanged, and so, too, is the towing path which was one of the artist's favourite haunts. Giant burdocks, pink hemp agrimony, dingy figwort, and large-leaved comfrey grow close beside it, and it is fragrant of water-mint and almond-scented meadow-sweet. A more peaceful scene one cannot imagine. Not a jarring sound breaks the spell of its quiet beauty. The stream flows silently until it falls over the weir, and even then its voice is as soothing as that of a summer breeze among summer leaves. Now and again a rat rustles in the sedges or a fish makes a faint splash as it rises to the surface of the mill pool. Brilliant-hued dragon-flies flash like living gems above the bright-green water-weeds, beautiful as the flickering sun-gleams which steal through the willows to the stream. A lad who came down to the river to fish has fallen asleep on the bank, where he lies half concealed by mauve-flowered water mints. His rod has fallen from his hand and its line is entangled with a patch of 'stout-stemmed

hemlock in the stream. His stillness reminds me that Constable, while painting here one day, sat so still that a field mouse crept into his coat pocket.

Dusk descends with almost tropical suddenness upon the Stour valley, for when the setting sun reaches the uplands' high horizon the shadows steal quickly over the lowlands. As soon as the light fails little wisps of mist appear, marking the windings of the river. Slowly the mist spreads over the meadows, lurking close to the ground, so that the trunks of trees are hidden while their branches are unconcealed. The grass and flowers are soon saturated with moisture, and the briars fringed with mist-drops which shower down at the slightest touch. Then it is time to leave the lowlands and seek a clearer and drier air; so I retrace my steps to East Bergholt. Under the dense leafage of the sylvan part of the Flatford road the gloom is now at its deepest, and a man who bids me a gruff "good-night" passes unseen; but when I reach the gate over which I got my first glimpse of the Vale of Dedham a surprise awaits me. For there I see the moon rising and slowly filling the vale with silvery light. The effect is weirdly beautiful; it is aërial, nebulous, phantasmal; for the whole valley is now white with mist. From my point of vantage I can almost believe I am on a mountain top and looking down on cloudland, and that the dark blotches which are really trees are glimpses of the earth beneath the clouds. Nature has drawn a white coverlet over the sleeping earth—a coverlet which, in the moonlight, seems made of the very drapery of dreams.


Scale of Miles
Authors Route
THE WASH
CROMER
Overstrand
Sidestrand
Trimingham
Mundesley
WELLS
Stiffkey
Langham
Binham
Burnham Thorpe
Heacham
Snettisham
Dersingham
Sandringham
Wolferton
Babingley
W. Newton
Castle Rising
Terrington St. Clements
KINGS LYNN
WISBECH
Tilney All Saints
Islington
Wiggenhall St. Mary
Castle Acre
FAKENHAM
AYLSHAM
Erpingham
Blickling
Sall
Stratton Strawless
St. Faiths
Wrexham
Costessey Hall
EAST DEREHAM
Bawburgh
Keigham
NORWICH
Acle
Filby
Caister
GREAT YARMOUTH
Breydon Water
Needham
Burgh
Fritton
Gaiton
LOWESTOFT
Caistor
Mulbarton
Hethel
WYMONDHAM
HINGHAM
WATTON
Scoulton
Stow Bardolph
DOWNHAM MARKET
Fordham
Hilgay
Southery
Branden Creek Br.
Weeting All Saints
Littleport
BRANDON
THETFORD
Barnham
Euston
Fakenham
Pakenham
Bagington
Troston
Fornham St. Genevieve
Barton Great
Hengrave
BURY ST. EDMUNDS
Haughley
STOW MARKET
NEEDHAM MARKET
Wickham Market
WOODBRIDGE
Butley
Orford Ness
IPSWICH
Westbrook
Bentley
Copdock
Trimley St. Mary
East Bergholt
Dedham
MANNINGTREE
HARWICH
HADLEIGH
SUDBURY
HALSTED
ROYSTON
CAMBRIDGE
NEWMARKET
STIVES
Haddenham
Aldreth
Earith
ELY
MARCH
ISLE OF ELY
NORFOLK
SUFFOLK
EAST HARLING
HARLESTON
BUNGAY
Wrentham
Beccles
HALESWORTH
SOUTHWOLD
Walberswick
Blythburgh
DUNWICH
Yenford
DEBENHAM
FRAMLINGHAM
ALDBOROUGH
Orford
BOTESDALE
The Fork
Stour R.
Cam R.
Ouse R.
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